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MORE MEMORIES

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MORE MEMORIES

By
MARGOT OXFORD

WITH TWELVE PLATES



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I DEDICATE THIS BOOK
TO ONE OF THE LOVES OF MY LIFE—
PRISCILLA BIBESCO

PREFACE

THESE recollections are not intended to be a continuation of my Autobiography, but a complement to it. All I aim at is to go into closer detail over matters that I have already mentioned, and write of new persons, places, and events.

In early works of fiction it was the fashion for authors to take their readers down long corridors, keep them waiting in dim vestibules, and intrigue their curiosity before introducing them to the principal personages. Not only was the method leisurely, but the story was often so intricate, that ribbon book-markers—plain and coloured—were popular presents to put between the pages of books to prevent readers from losing their place in the thread of copious and complicated plots.

Times have changed ; and whether because there is no Walter Scott, Gaboriau, Fielding, Richardson, or Wilkie Collins, I do not know, but book-markers to-day are neither bought nor given.

These reminiscences are written for those who like to read short books at odd moments when it is of little consequence whether they keep, or lose, their place.

We have all got friends who have—what my husband called—lending-library minds. They can discuss, borrow, and skim books which they seldom read, never return, and rarely assimilate ; and even those who *buy*, and *read* books, have different methods by which they read. The time of day may influence them. Some prefer light literature in the train and shockers when they go to sleep ; others select serious works when they travel and tedious books when they go to bed ; and some read with their fingers, and some with their minds. But I

had a lesson in the art of reading when I was young that has always remained in my memory.

I was staying at Balliol College with the Master, and Dr. Jowett and I were sitting alone in his library one evening after his guests had gone. He was in a serious humour, and urged me to give up a life of movement and frivolity, as he said that going from country house to country house and seeing so many people of the world prevented me from having the leisure, or the inclination to read, and this was "distinguishable from true wisdom."¹

"To be a good companion to yourself, or to anyone else, my dear Margaret," he said, "you should cultivate a taste for literature ;" and, to my surprise, he added : "I think with less love of conversation and more intellectual energy, you might write books."

We went on to discuss that part of our lives which should be lived alone. He told me of the contempt he had always felt for those who disliked being alone, as it showed a lack of mental ambition, self-reliance, and all power of reflection. No person was worth listening to who echoed the opinions of other men, or merely expressed the surface of their own thoughts. There had seldom been a great writer who had not been a great reader : and he reminded me of one of the many famous sayings of Dr. Johnson :

"I never desire to converse with a man who has written more than he has read."

After exchanging opinions upon the merits of various books ² and their authors, he said :

¹ "Distinguishable from true wisdom," is a Chinese expression.

² We disagreed over "Alice in Wonderland." He said it was a mistake to give it to children ; I maintained it was a work of genius, and wished I had been "the dear child" Dodgson had dedicated it to—"in memory of a summer day." Had the Master lived, he would have seen the original script covering 92 pages, and two first editions of this book sold for £30,000 to Mr. E. R. Johnson, an American collector.

"My dear Margaret, you will never be a reader till you learn the art of skipping."

I was profoundly shocked by this remark and told him that from my earliest years I had been taught that it was like cheating at cards to look at the end of a novel, or indeed to leave out a single word of any book that I was reading. He replied that looking at the end of a novel was an inadequate interpretation of the word "skipping," and that he was not speaking of fools.

Pointing to the books piled upon his crowded shelves, he said :

"Do you mean to assert that every word in all these volumes is worth reading? You must choose in life what is *worth*, and what is *not* worth your attention, and few authors would be so pretentious as to claim that every word they had written was worth reading."

From the moment I had this licence given to me by such an authority, I skipped several of the sunsets, many of the comments, and most of the reflections of half the books I read.

As this is what most readers of this book are likely to do, I shall enter into their spirit, and jump from event to event, place to person, and topic to topic, in the hope that what I write may interest them.

MARGOT OXFORD.

1933.

Although Mr. Alfred Spender is in no way responsible for anything written in this book, I wish to thank him for reading the manuscript ; and to express my gratitude to Miss le Brand (78, Jermyn Street) for her prompt and accurate typing.

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CHAPTER I

SOME EARLY RECOLLECTIONS

SOME years after the publication of my Autobiography I went to lunch with my friends the Desmond MacCarthys in Chelsea. I had been unexpectedly detained in Bedford Square, and started late.

Punctuality with me is not a virtue, it is an obsession ; and were I asked to-day what has helped me most throughout my life, I would say : “ *a sense of time.*” Since the age of thirty I have never been able to sleep more than six hours, and often not as many as six. This has given me three or four hours more than most people have in which to read, and to write ; and roughly speaking the combination of sleeplessness and punctuality has given me two lives. From childhood, to be kept waiting has made me feel physically sick.

On this particular occasion I put my head out of the window of my taxi—at the first block in the traffic—and said :

“ Go as fast as you can as I’m late ! ”

To which the driver replied :

“ Oh ! We know yer !—Y’re always in a ’urry, *you* are ! ” This remark prompted me to say :

“ I wish to God *you* were ! ”

“ Would yer like me to give yer a haccident ? ” he said.

“ I’m not at all afraid,” I retorted ; “ you haven’t got the nerve to ! ”

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“ Would yer like me to give yer a haccident ? ” he said.

“ I’m not at all afraid,” I retorted ; “ you haven’t got the nerve to ! ”

This observation so far from exasperating, appeared to amuse him ; and after resuming my seat, I wondered if I had been wise. I thought of the Chinese saying : "Haste comes of the Evil One ; Leisure from God."

This is a sensible saying, and one that should be impressed upon everybody. To have a serene temperament is probably the happiest gift that nature can bestow upon you (and one that I have often envied), but it does not follow that because you are lacking in patience or serenity, that you are hasty. Punctual people are seldom hasty, and are only in a hurry when they think that they are blocking exits, or keeping others waiting.

Since staying in America, I have had a lesson in the sacredness of leisure,¹ and am convinced that it comes from God : but I am not equally convinced that "Haste comes of the Evil One."

Impatience is not so much a moral, as a physical defect. Habits of mind and of body—sleeplessness, temperament, and other conditions—contribute to it, and serenity ultimately depends upon health. Impatience is deceptive, and should not be confounded with lack of thought, or of deep feeling. Some of the most profound philosophers have been impatient ; and an exaggeration of serenity can be found in the sullen, impenetrable courage of Orientals which ends in complete indifference to life.

I have always longed to have the qualities that I do not possess, but I have not got *all* the defects that I am accused of. I write this in self-defence, as I sometimes read newspaper cuttings sent to me describing myself, in which the same observations are usually made. I am brilliant but hasty, witty but not wise, and quite incapable of deep feeling or profundity of thought. My unthinking candour makes me sacrifice my friends, my neighbours, my family, and myself, with the same sharp blade of a witty and damaging tongue. I might have

¹ I wrote in my American diary "Very hospitable, very slow, and *always* in a hurry. I long to see a man leaning over a gate looking at *nothing*."

been a power to influence my friends for good, whereas I have only succeeded in alienating them. And after a few anecdotes of my epigrams—usually inaccurate, and not at all funny—they end by saying that I am a good judge of character.¹

Journalists, like other writers, are, I imagine, often in search of material, and as long as they confine themselves to statements as to favourite flowers, food, names, or occupations—hazarding a little upon racing or religion—no objection can be taken: but when it comes to descriptions of character, I can never understand why they write about people they do not know. At best, they are only advertising superficial opinions and emphasizing rumour.

Rumour is untraceable, incalculable, and infectious. It shapes public men in the opinion of ignorant people, but is seldom right. On the University of Aberdeen there is written:

“They say: what say they? . . . *Let them say!*”²

No doubt there are some people, who for what reason I cannot tell, will always attract the public eye and excite rumour, but I have never met more lonely and defenceless beings than those who are called “well-known people.” We can stand up for our friends, and criticize our enemies, but what can we do for “well-known people?”

In the quest for historical truth—or the profound

¹ Had I been as lacking in reflection, as frivolous and superficial as my Press biographers imply, I could not be a good judge of character. Thoughtlessness, hastiness, and wit, do not give imaginative insight: and though I do not want to claim for myself any exceptional virtue, I have seldom been wrong in my estimate of my fellow-creatures, or missed the gold-mine that lies in the opinions of drab men of low estate. Nevertheless, I have been devoured all my life by an incurable and burning impatience: and to this day find all oratory, biography, operas, films, plays, books, and persons, too long.

² This was one of my husband’s favourite quotations. He wrote it in an album of mine before we married.

understanding of human nature—there is no more dangerous and unreliable guide than Rumour : and I have lived long enough in the world to hear wrong verdicts pronounced, and believed, upon almost all the famous men and political events with which I am familiar.

Lord Grey of Fallodon could have prevented the War ; Mr. Lloyd George won it ; Lord Balfour was too philosophical to care for political power ; Mr. Gladstone was lacking in a sense of humour ; Lord Morley was “ honest John ; ” Lord Kitchener a straightforward simple soldier ; Lord Haldane had no vanity, and Mr. Bonar Law no ambition. But the man about whom public opinion has been the most misled was my husband.¹

It is perhaps not inappropriate here to mention some of these misconceptions. His unclouded happiness in his first marriage and the success of his brilliant children, added to the complete confidence he had in his own capacity and determination, made him indifferent to criticism and contemptuous of rumour.

Born with a vein of intellectual scorn, I observed before we married something non-conducting in his manner to acquaintances, which deprived it of warmth and welcome. And after our marriage I would chide him over this lack of expansiveness. But when I realized that I was talking in Tennant, and not in Asquith language, and that what I said worried him, I desisted. His equanimity of temper and sensibility for other people's feelings, were what no member of my own family ever possessed. I therefore thought that I was attaching too much importance to what was merely social.

Nevertheless, if I dared claim any mark that my devotion made upon my husband, I would say that I

¹ Hazlitt writes : “ Simplicity of character is the natural result of profound thought.” This may not be true of many men, but it is profoundly true of my husband.

taught him to suffer fools gladly. You can only influence the strong, never the weak characters in life, and later in his career, all those who knew him realized that under an unapproachable reserve, he had depths of tenderness and emotion. His counsel and sympathy were sought and found not only by his children—who adored him—but by strange and unexpected people. He was a shy man who detested publicity, personalities, and vituperation, and though his self-confidence was unassailable, it was unconscious, and he set no sort of value on himself.

At a later time in his career I urged him to hit back, but the events at the time I am speaking of were of such tragic dimension that my suggestion that he should join issue in what he considered personal political fisticuffs met with his profound contempt and disapproval. He wrote in a commonplace book of mine, "The eagle suffers little birds to sing, and is not careful what they mean thereby, knowing that with the shadow of his wings, he can at pleasure stint their melody." (Sir Thomas Browne.) This did not come from vanity—of which no one that I have ever known was more devoid—but from unconscious arrogance and something that was aloof and self-sufficing in his nature.

Neither his wives, his children, nor his social or political engagements could interfere with his inner life which was incommunicable and as ordered and thoughtful as his daily habits.

One of his peculiarities was his dislike of all serious talk upon politics. He did not want to hear anything that anybody could say about them, and with the exception of myself, Edward Grey, Alfred Spender and Lord Crewe he never discussed more than very lightly the profound political problems that were harassing him, or the conduct and character of his colleagues. With the passionate devotion we had for one another, I guessed what he was feeling ; but it was only when he was dying that he spoke freely to me about the part that Arthur

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Balfour, Mr. Lloyd George and other of his colleagues had played in the crisis of 1916.

I will end this digression upon the misconceptions the public had upon my husband when rumour spread that he was cold, lethargic, and undecided, by quoting Hazlitt.

A man's reputation is not in his own keeping, but lies at the mercy of the profligacy of others. Calumny requires no proof. The throwing out malicious imputations against any character leaves a stain, which no after-refutation can wipe out. To create an unfavourable impression, it is not necessary that certain things should be *true* but that they *have been said*. The imagination is of so delicate a texture, that even words wound it.

Were I asked to-day what was the chief characteristic of my husband, I could not say that he was a man of letters, science or philosophy. I would say that he was essentially a man of *action*, as he never at any moment in his life feared taking decisions ; nor was he deflected from his purpose by public opinion or the Press. Obstacles stimulated him, and he took an almost puckish pleasure in telling his colleagues of intentions which—though meeting with their approval—they thought impossible of achievement.

In the passing of the Parliament Bill no one could have shown more tolerance, but no one could deflect his invincible determination. One evening after dinner he and I and Sir Edward Grey¹ were discussing the folly of the peers, and the relationship which they considered right between the two Houses of Parliament, when Loulou Harcourt² and others came into the room and joined the conversation. Lord Harcourt said it was obvious that something had to be done as the House of Lords could not be allowed to trespass on the recognized privileges of the House of Commons, but it would be a struggle lasting for years before any Government could change the House of Lords. I am not sure whether it was I, or another, but some one said you might as well attempt

¹ Viscount Grey of Fallodon.

² The late Viscount Harcourt.

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to influence the Marble Arch. After a little chaff, Henry took a small diary which he always kept in his pocket—usually given to him by Lady Horner on New Year's Day—and wrote the month his Bill would be put upon the Statute Book. They all smiled at what they considered his gross optimism ; nevertheless, when the Bill passed, he showed me the entry he had made that night of the date he had predicted.

In August, 1914, not only the bulk of the Liberal Party, but most of his colleagues were passionately opposed to our entering into the War. The foreign events that had led up to the final catastrophe, were too complicated and unknown for the average man to realize the gravity of the European situation, and the Cabinet was sharply divided in opinion. Lord Morley and Mr. John Burns resigned at once, and threats of resignation came from unexpected quarters. I was amazed at my husband's coolness, knowing as I did his horror of war. I could not persuade him to go to bed, as he said he would not sleep, and could only think of how our Party could present a united front in the face of the situation. The man who helped him most in those terrible days and nights was Sir Edward Grey ; and though his own mind was set, he told me that if Grey resigned he would not remain an hour in 10 Downing Street.

In the Cabinet of that time there were men of a different calibre from those that we have seen since the War : ¹ and what appeared hesitation on the part of my husband, was consideration for the opinions held by some of his obstinate and distinguished colleagues.

¹ The rudeness in the House of Commons in my youth was greater than it is to-day ; but politicians were more convinced, and fought with more ardour for their convictions. When Chamberlain introduced Protection, there was none of the leisurely, benevolent fumbling that characterizes politicians of every Party to-day, and it needed infinite courage and resolution to defeat a man like Joseph Chamberlain. (This was written in January, 1930, since which there have been far-reaching changes. I am altering nothing in the text of this book.)

The expression "Wait and see" was exclaimed upon the only occasion on which I ever saw my husband exasperated in the House of Commons. Said by anyone else, it would have been considered a sober platitude, but quoted as said by a man whom Rumour had spread was incapable of action, it was damaging, and proved a useful slogan (to use a vulgar expression) for enemies and journalists, when they observed that things were not going well in the War.

From the day war was declared, my husband decided that once the generals who were to go to the Front had been selected, he would do his best to back them; for though "*la guerre est trop sérieuse pour la laisser aux militaires*," the diversity of opinion in his Cabinet made it impossible even for the most militant Prime Minister to have conducted war from Downing Street.¹

¹ We were in residence at Walmer Castle, as being on the coast, it was more convenient to see generals, admirals, and other men of importance who were crossing the sea than had we been living at The Wharf. We saw Sir John French at Walmer and in Downing Street; and after several disastrous military reverses I heard my husband implore him to postpone further frontal attacks till the arsenals over here were in a position to supply him with sufficient munitions.

He was painfully aware, from all the private letters we received from France, that there was shortage; but this was due to the early and conflicting orders from the Front for shrapnel one week, and high explosives the next, and not from any lack of forethought on the side of the Government. People would have been amazed could they have known the dimensions of the orders that Lord Kitchener and my husband had placed for munitions all over these islands immediately after the outbreak of war. But it is not possible to equip an emergency army by a wave of the wand; and my husband felt it his duty to warn the Commander-in-Chief. Sir John French's answers were always the same: the operations that he contemplated were not extensive, and for the moment he considered the munitions that he had were sufficient.

These unsatisfying replies continued till they led to the misleading and unedifying scandal of the shells—incidentally contributing to the formation of the first Coalition. Lord Fisher's resignation from the Admiralty, and the situation in the Dardanelles made it undesirable to have debates in the two Houses of Parliament in which

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I have strayed from what I was writing to prove that oftener than not, *Rumour should be reversed*.

For a travesty of Truth, the origin of "Primrose Day"—as sacred as Protection to the heart of the Tories—is perhaps the most classical, and grotesque.

When Lord Beaconsfield died, Queen Victoria sent a handsome wreath of woodland primroses to be placed upon his grave with a touching label attached to it on which was written: "His favourite flower." Everyone supposed that the Queen was alluding to Disraeli; whereas—with the profound emotion of a professional widow—she was moved by the memory of her husband's simple tastes. Lord Beaconsfield was never known to allude to primroses except once when in a famous novel he said they were valuable ingredients in a salad.¹ The Prince Consort's solemn conscience and intellectual occupations were relieved by country sights, and his favourite flowers were those that are annually gathered and festooned round the many statues of Disraeli.

* * * * *

To return to my drive to Chelsea, I had every reason to regret the defects of my nature, as whenever there was a halt in the traffic, my taxi-driver shot forward, shaving on two wheels lamp-posts, buses, bicycles, and shelters; and flinging me like a Japanese toy from side to side on the reputation of the Commander-in-Chief and other men in authority might have been seriously damaged, and the confidence of our fighting forces undermined.

Lord Kitchener told me (after the formation of the first Coalition) that he would have preferred a change at that time in the High Command: and I am betraying no Cabinet secret when I say that Lord Kitchener never had a high opinion of Sir John French. From the moment he received the famous telegram on August 30, "I have decided to begin my retirement to-morrow in the morning behind the Seine in a south-westerly direction west of Paris," there was a covert and constant friction between the two men. But anxious that no injustice should be done to Sir John French, my husband refused to make a change in the High Command.

¹ In "Coningsby" he compares poached eggs to primroses.

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the hard and slippery seat of the taxi. Exhilarated by the hazards we had taken, I complimented him when I arrived at my destination upon his efficiency and courage. He appeared pleased by my remarks, after which I gave him ten shillings. Surprised—and hesitating before accepting his fare—he said :

“ Why don’t yer give us a cheap edition of yer book ? Some of us have read it, and my missus sez just what I sez ; yer should write a bit cheaper.”

I told him that I had had no power to fix the price of my book as it had been decided by my publishers but that I entirely agreed with him ; my Autobiography was far too expensive—after which we parted the best of friends.

Upon my return to Bedford Square I told my husband of this incident. He was interested and amused, and said that I had received a great compliment, and he was convinced that I should go on with my writing. I said that I feared my education had not been of the kind to enable me to write upon subjects of intellectual interest ; and that upon lighter matters, most people could write more or less successfully. To which he replied that my life had been one of such adventure, experience, and variety, that if I could continue to express myself in the same manner as I had done in my Autobiography, it would probably interest the public as much as if I attempted to write upon more elevated and ambitious subjects. He reminded me of Sir Edmund Gosse’s letter about my book which had given us both such pleasure that I print it.¹

July 16th, 1920.

MY DEAR MARGOT,

I have read your proofs through for the *Sunday Times* with the very closest attention. I cannot sufficiently thank you for the chance which has allowed me to read these beautiful, sincere and

¹ As Sir Edmund Gosse did not mark his letter “ Private ” I showed it to several friends : Lord Crewe, Lord Morley, and others, but when his criticism of my Autobiography came out in the *Sunday Times* it bore no resemblance to his letter to me, and might have been written by an enemy.

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eloquent pages before the whole world unites in praising them ; the record is of an *extraordinary* power and beauty. It will rank with the greatest Autobiographies in literature.

You have achieved an impression of Truth, which is really thrilling : not a false note, not a silly touch of mock modesty : all is full, rich, and vivacious. The account of your sister's death is one of the most moving, most living, most excruciating things I ever read : and not a touch too much. Nothing forced, nothing false, all genuine passion and emotion.

I cannot say how much I am moved and touched. I did not expect (may I say so ?) anything like this. I can add no more, but I write this breathless note to assure you that you have nothing to fear from criticism. All good men and most women if they have the power to admire, will unite in praising.

Always, my dear and splendid confrère,

Yours affectionately,
EDMUND GOSSE.

My husband went on to say that what he had discovered—to his surprise—was the insatiable curiosity that the public had to read about the sayings, doings, and foibles of famous and interesting people. I replied that it was within my recollection that it was this particular part of my Autobiography that had been the most heavily criticized and severely abused : to which he observed that written with my sort of common sense and directness few people of sincerity would object to what was said about them. He added—rather slyly—that though I might dispel some of their illusions about themselves, my fairness of statement, and insight into character, would make up for any excess of candour.

I treasured in my heart and mind this criticism ; and will relate what he said to me about the first book that I published.

When I had finished writing my Autobiography—which I had shown to no one but Lord Crewe¹ and Sir Edmund Gosse²—I put the first edition of it upon the writing-table of my husband's library at The Wharf. He came into my Barn bedroom the next morning and sat

¹ Lord Crewe before it was in proof.

² Sir Edmund after it was written.

on my bed. He told me that he had spent most of the night in reading it. I looked at him with apprehension ; as when a literary amateur—married to a man of scholarly fame and love of letters—has attempted to write the history of her life, she is anxious that the man whose judgment she most values should express his opinion upon it.

He said that he thought my Autobiography was one of absorbing interest and literary distinction, which no one could have written but myself : after which I burst into tears.

I can say with truth, that this has been the proudest moment of my life ; and inspired by the memory of his rare praise, I shall endeavour to continue the narrative of my recollections and experience.

* * * * *

Born of a large and obscure family in the wildness and beauty of the Border country, I received the scrappy and superficial education that was given to the well-to-do in the 'eighties. Pianos—with magenta pleating behind maple-wood fretwork—were thumped ; hard paints out of wooden boxes were used to copy flowers and fairies on week-days and illuminate texts for school-children on Sundays ; English History was taught and retaught, from Alfred the Great to the reign of Queen Elizabeth, and we recited French fables in the presence of Swiss governesses to pained but interested parents after tea in the evenings. The mildest questions put to any of our teachers were called "impertinent" ; and it was only because my father had a fine library, and we were fond of reading, that I learnt anything at all before I was sixteen.

We were all sporting, enterprising, musical, and artistic ; and the girls of the family were full of intellectual temperament and ambition. But I never remember at any time in my youth being encouraged to read or to study. It was largely due to my father, who—probably from seeing us seldom—thought all his children were beautiful and brilliant, that any of us developed. But trained by a shrewd, cautious, and becalmed mother, his

praise—though enjoyed—was suspected. With her slow smile, and excellent sense of humour, my mother could twist her husband at any given moment round the little finger of her perfect hand.

“Pay no attention to your father, darling,” she would say; “he is so impressionable!” And when he expatiated upon the folly of young women marrying poor men, and the desirability that his daughters should make a worldly success of their futures, she would shrug her shoulders, raise her eyebrows, snub his advice, and smile away his confidence.

I never understood why my mother had so little faith in the fortune and future of her daughters; but she appeared to be obsessed by the idea that our courage and unconventionality would ultimately lead us into difficulties. She did not care for London or society, and a quiet respectable country life, with a quiet respectable country squire fulfilled all that she ever desired for her five girls. She was also apprehensive as to where our innocent flirtations and lively looks might land us.

Having been a great flirt, and a great beauty, my mother had so often said that she was glad that all her daughters were plain, that though my eldest sister Posie (Mrs. Gordon Duff), and my second sister Chartie (Lady Ribblesdale), were exceptionally pretty, and neither Lucy, Laura, nor I, repellent in appearance, we were well aware of our deficiencies, and having no reason to be vain, accepted with unconcerned acquiescence my mother’s considered and reiterated opinion.

In the early years of my life we saw little of our mother. She was always abroad, travelling from one health resort to another in pursuit of my eldest sister’s health. Having lost her first daughter—Janet, who before I was born had died of tubercle of the lungs—she was overwhelmed by anxiety lest the same fate should overtake her second.¹

¹ My sister, Pauline Gordon Duff, died of tubercle of the lungs, and so also, many years later, after my mother died, did my sister, Chartie Ribblesdale.

It was probably due to this absorption, and the vanity and ignorance of our nurses, an ignorance from which every mother suffers, that the health of the other members of our family was completely neglected.

We were always forced to eat more than we wanted, to wear more clothes than is healthy, and never allowed to drink as much water as we asked for. What is called "night air" has never been popular with nurses; and we not only slept in thick flannel nightgowns with our hair encased in white tape nets, but all the windows of our bedrooms were shut, and we wore chamois leather chest-protectors on our backs and on our bosoms.

Although I had been fragile and delicate as a child, I was in many ways deceptively strong. Sleepless, irascible, and full of intellectual ambition, I puzzled the Edinburgh and local doctors; but beyond warning my parents that I was highly strung and over-developed, they did little to establish my health.

My Nannie confided to neighbouring Nannies that I was "old-fashioned," which in nursery parlance means being interested in subjects beyond the intelligence of the schoolroom or the servants'-hall. My conduct and character were subjects for endless sagas to the rare visitors who penetrated into our nursery, and I might have been a jockey or a genius for all that they knew about me.

Though nervous I was bold, and as active and light-footed as a cat upon a roof. There was no tree that I could not climb, or wall that I could not scale, and my insensibility to giddiness at great heights was the despair of my teachers and my parents.

The first exhilarating sensation of danger that I can remember, was when I scrambled out of an attic window at midnight up a sweep's ladder on to the high and turreted roof of Glen. My sister Laura—who shared my bedroom—was away, and my nurse was asleep. I pulled my tweed knickerbockers over my flannel nightdress and put on my tennis shoes. Had the night not been hot and

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dry, the slippery soles of my india-rubber shoes would have added to the danger of my exploit ; but lacing up shooting-boots was not to be thought of when speed was of the first importance.

With the noiseless footfall of a burglar, I crawled past the servants' bedrooms, and squeezed myself through the narrow aperture of an attic window. Sitting among the menacing chimney-pots, and looking at the stars, gave me an exquisite feeling of freedom and romance. To be out of reach of all authority, and sit without fear of interruption under the impenetrable indigo of the silent skies, set all my thoughts free ; and I felt that no punishment—however severe—could take away the poignant pleasure of my hazardous and lonely adventure.

I had no ambition to be a heroine ; but the nagging of nurses, the boredom of Sundays, and the daily routine of monotonous moral theories reiterated in our schoolroom, made me only too thankful to be alone.

Although these activities were heavily punished, I had tasted blood ; and a love of physical danger, midnight wanderings and unexpected adventure, has never left me. This is the untamable side of my nature that has been a challenge to the world ; but I do not regret it, as there is nothing that I admire more than people who live dangerously.

It was probably because I was never harnessed to routine that, in later years, some of my acquaintance augured badly as to the success of my prospected marriage. In the same manner as the journalists, they said that anyone as hasty and frivolous as myself could not succeed in being a good wife, or good step-mother to five exceptionally brilliant, argumentative, and intellectual children ; and that my lack of profundity would inevitably hamper my husband's political career. Fortunately for me, he did not share their apprehensions ; and I can never forget (when in a moment of depression) I confided these prophecies to Mr. Gladstone, he said :

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“ My dear Margot, I think you would make an excellent wife to any politician—even a Prime Minister ! ”

We all had brittle, intellectual tempers ; but it was more from an ardent desire to express what we thought to be *true*¹ than any desire to triumph over an opponent that we appeared intolerant. After I married, I was surprised to see how little my step-family quarrelled with one another. Though intellectually determined to score, they conducted their disputes with logic, dryness, and dignity ; and without the least effort ended by making most of their opponents look ridiculous. We Tennants were of quite another temperament. Unconventional, and hot-headed, our lack of training in argument made us retort with spirit to opinions that we were convinced were unsound, and though devoted to each other, we not unfrequently ended a discussion by bouncing out of the room. My mother could neither follow, nor endure, these complicated family disputes and was never tired of damping down all intellectual wranglings whether upon books, politics, or people.

Laura² and I were not only hypercritical and argumentative, but exceedingly ambitious, and of all our ambitions the one that obsessed us was a desire to write books. We thought of the great men and women authors who had lived in provincial circles—the Brontes living in a parsonage, the poets struggling under skylights, Chatterton who killed himself before he was eighteen, and other youthful geniuses—and made up our minds that we should put ourselves into the market of literature, and earn both fame and fortune. We were not to write merely for private circulation—to be admired by a few indulgent aunts—but write well enough to get some enterprising firm to publish our books.

Neither of us could decide whether our efforts were to be History, Biography, or Fiction, but we agreed not to

¹ Lord Balfour writes in his fragmentary Autobiography that he “ always preferred Truth to Victory.”

² My sister, who married Alfred Lyttelton.

show each other a single line till we had completed the first chapter of our book.

One day, after my brothers had returned to Eton and my parents were on the Continent, we sat down upon the rolled-up carpet of the deserted drawing-room, where we were sure that no one was likely to interrupt us.

Unfolding her manuscript, Laura read in a solemn voice :

“ *A New Novel.*

“ *The Beginning*—

“ *Mrs. Walter’s cottage was a neat white-washed one.*”

Listening with the closest attention, my critical faculty was aroused, and I said :

“ Somehow or other that doesn’t sound to me a good literary sentence. I don’t like the word ‘ neat ’ ; it isn’t applicable to a cottage.”

“ Oh ! Very well ! ” she retorted. “ If you are going to be so severe about every word I write, I shan’t read you any more ! ”

I cannot remember the opening sentence of my own novel, but after this unlucky causerie we retired to our bedrooms with our manuscripts, and abandoned all literary ambitions.

I regret this now, as if I had begun to write earlier I might have achieved more : literature is an exacting mistress, and needs constant thought, work, and correction ; but though I am fastidious and correct my writing, I am not very industrious. I consoled myself after this by keeping a carefully dated and accurate Diary from the age of fourteen till the year I published my Autobiography. All through my life I have been over-critical ; my eye for what is beautiful, and ear for what is sound, have made me both physically and mentally fastidious. My only excuse is, that this fastidiousness has not prevented me from admiring more than I disparage, and I am always ready to suggest an alternative to what I criticize adversely. I have often resented

stinted approbation, but, speaking for myself, I think it irritating to hear indiscriminate praise ; and it is difficult to steer a steady course between the two.

There is nothing that I enjoy more than good-humoured discussion upon all subjects—whether upon art, literature, or persons ; but it must be *good-humoured*.

Dr. Johnson says that good humour is “ the balm of being ; a habit of being pleased, a constant and perennial softness of manner, easiness of approach, and suavity of disposition.”

But how seldom you meet with this freedom from self, and this good humour !—I have rarely seen it in a man, and hardly ever in a woman. The most conspicuous difference between the sexes that I have noticed is the incapacity that my sex has to deliberate. The cleverer a woman is, the more her mind is set ; and the people who spoil argument and obstruct progress in all the Committee meetings that I have ever attended have been clever women.

The value of argument is that it crystallizes your thoughts and is a sign of cerebral vitality. It is also the best training for intellectual temper ; an asset of incalculable advantage in debate, diplomacy, and most of the walks of life. If the temper of your mind gets interwoven with your convictions, you lose in heat what you might gain by reason. One of the many classical remarks made by Dr. Johnson is to be found in Boswell’s “ Life.” He relates how a pertinacious gentleman who had talked in a very puzzling manner said : “ I don’t understand you, sir ! ” upon which Johnson observed, “ Sir, I have found you an argument ; but I am not obliged to find you an understanding.”

Laura and I had never heard of Dr. Johnson ; but our wide taste in books gave us every opportunity for discussion, and I remember upon one occasion arguing with her upon the difference between Fancy and Imagination from the time we retired to bed till the hour that the housemaid brought us our hot water in the morning.



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We all expressed ourselves well, as such ideas as we had came smoking hot from our minds to our lips ; but as we had never met anyone of mark, we seldom heard well-reasoned argument or first-rate conversation, and were as much surprised as our mother was when an obscure visitor said to her :

“ I think Laura, Lucy, and Margot, are brilliant talkers.”

The male members¹ of my family were of a cooler circulation, and different intellectual ambition. Endowed with an excellent sense of humour and little patience, they disliked argument, despised society, and adored the country. They were all conspicuous, capable, and confirmed sportsmen, and being exceptionally efficient with their guns and rods, spent every day of their lives tramping across the Border to catch, watch, or kill, some bird, beast, or fish. I was only too delighted to accompany them upon these lonely and victorious expeditions, as I hated lessons, knew nothing about plants, detested conservatories, and always had a longing to be out and away from all control. Many a time I have tethered my pony on the banks of the Tweed, or kept my brother Eddy Glenconner's pipe alight while he crawled silently through the green rushes at dawn to wait for wild duck under the shadow of the Deans.

There was not a stone dyke, peat bog, or patch of burnt and flowering heather with which I was not familiar, and I made friends with wandering tramps, and every shepherd, farmer and fisherman on the Border.

Looking back to-day—over many and long years—I can truly say that the influence that has permeated my

¹ I make an exception of my brother Jack (the Right Hon. H. J. Tennant) who distinguished himself in the House of Commons when he was under-Secretary for War during Lord Kitchener's administration at the War Office. His industry, efficiency and tact won him golden opinions from all. Before we left 10 Downing Street he became Secretary of State for Scotland. In his later years, to my regret, he retired from politics and has given his life up to fishing and shooting.

whole existence has been my love of Nature, and an inner anchorage to the wide horizon and beautiful moorlands of the Border country—nothing that can happen to me in the future will ever rob me of the morning glory of my Glen background. (The motions of my own mind have never been moved and extended in the same degree as by the emotion produced by my returning visits to Glen—and the long, lingering shadows which they leave behind.)

Nature has a life of her own which she cannot share with town-bred people. She refuses to recognize sight-seers and strangers, and unless the beauty of her face has been disfigured by a handsome hotel she never sees them twice. After all the charabancs and souvenir-hunters have passed on the open road, she resumes her silent intimacy with the shy partners of her soil.

The Asquith family were of necessity town-birds. They never had the fortune, leisure or circumstances to live in the country. Until I was seventeen, we knew few people in high society, and had never lived in a town. Apart from this, two more different natures and temperaments than Asquiths and Tennants could not have been found. We were born adventurous, familiar, gay and unselfconscious, and not only interested in every passer-by but delighted in talking to each other. The Asquiths were cool, intellectual and shy, and though quite as fond of, were less attached and interested in each other than we were. They were silent at family meals unless their father was present, and with the exception of Violet—a brilliant raconteur—they seldom wanted to hear what the other thought. They were not at their ease with simple cottage folk and I never saw one of them go inside a cottage, or talk to a villager on any of the estates which we rented for the summer holidays. If you are not bred in the country, you may admire the views, enjoy the walks, and love the holidays ; but you are not in touch with the lives of men who are part of the soil, and I have watched with

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pity the unemotional scrutiny that betrays those who only know the country from outside. Early contact with work, books, and people of one's own class in life sharpens the intellect but does not develop the emotions in the same way as the daily contact with poor cottage people ; and though the Asquith children loved the country, they did not have the good fortune that I had to be born in the beauty of the Border.

Considering how many lovers there are of Sir Walter Scott and Wordsworth, I find few who are acquainted with the almost Highland beauty and historical interest of the Scotland that I was born in.

Our nearest, and most friendly neighbour lived in Traquair, a house which stands between the Tweed and the Quair, and were I asked to-day what I would most like to possess I would without hesitation say Traquair House. Nothing that I have ever seen can compare with this house for romance, dignity, and beauty. The Earl of Traquair of '45 was a zealous Jacobite, and took an oath that the iron gates leading through his avenue to his front door should never be opened till Prince Charlie came to the throne. The gates are flanked by brown painted stone bears supporting escutcheons decorated by the lilies of France, and underneath them is written : "Judge nought." They have never been opened since that day, and are now embedded in dandelions, nettles, and weeds.

My earliest riding recollection is galloping down this forbidden avenue to inquire after Lady Louisa Stuart—the last of her race—who died in 1873, within a month of her hundredth birthday. With the exception of my mother, no one but her lawyer, Mr. Hope Scott—whose wife was Sir Walter Scott's granddaughter—ever visited Lady Louisa Stuart. I saw her once, and remember watching, while my mother talked to her, the large diamond locket which hung upon the décolleté of her ample taffetas bodice.

Apart from Traquair House, there are many things of

historical interest in the vicinity of Glen. Our railway station changed its name from "St. Ronan's Wells" to Innerleithen; and the "Black Dwarf's Cottage" is on the moor that marches with ours. Many of the Waverley novels were written by Sir Walter at Ashesteil, owned in my youth by old Miss Russell (the first and last woman that I ever saw wear a crinoline), and the river Yarrow—immortalized by Wordsworth—flows through the Ettrick Forest that lies in the valley at our gates.

For us, Sir Walter Scott was a Shakespeare, and we had read some of his poems and most of his novels. One of the proudest moments of my youth was when Lord Napier of Ettrick (my mother's friend and lover) asked me to read aloud "The Antiquary" while I was staying with him at Thirlestane. I could never endure listening to other people reading, but to read myself to a cultivated man or an interested audience has always been a great and unaccustomed pleasure.

We had read a certain amount of prose; but beyond committing to memory "The boy stood on the burning deck"—and other poems of the same kind—we knew little of the great poets. We recited innocuous verses in monotonous voices for prizes given by my parents upon stated occasions; but it was only after my sister Laura died that I became intimate with the poetry of Wordsworth.

I can never forget the day when—in a moment of dejection after her death—looking through the books in the D'oo Cot (a name given to our Glen sitting-room), I stumbled upon the "Ode on Intimations of Immortality." It was my first great spiritual and literary awakening, and at a time when I saw nothing in life worth living for, the mysterious and persistent way in which Wordsworth contemplates man, invokes Nature, respects God, counsels silence, and fights every inch¹ of

¹ Since writing this I have read these lines of Wordsworth: "Suffering is permanent, obscure and dark, and has the nature of infinity."

the way to despair, revived my faith, and renewed my courage.

In his definition of poetry : " Emotion recollected in tranquillity,"¹ Wordsworth has given us a finished portrait of himself, and one that leads to profound reflection. I think it was Marcus Aurelius who said that we were a soul carrying a corpse, and adds : " Is the soul a fragment of God Himself prisoned in our earthly material—imperfect, because fragmentary ; yet in some way akin to the Most High ? "

(How soul-starving is the certainty of atheists, the dangerous complacency of Christian Scientists, and the mixture of satisfaction and self-swindle that support the spookists when you read the sayings of men like these !)

I had read nothing at the time of my sister's death to confirm my faith, or diminish my sorrow, and it did not seem possible that life could hold a greater anguish for me than this. But I was wrong.

The sorrows of the young are poignant ; their tears start early, and flow freely. The loss of a doll, the departure of a nurse, or the death of a dog, will throw them into paroxysms of grief. But everyone combines in a common desire to shelter the young from the sorrows and mysteries of life. Death is not alluded to, love is avoided, and disease is merely associated with a respite from lessons, and days spent in bed with a book or a toy. Hope is on the side of the young ; but Hope is the begetter of life, and is an ally that deserts you as you grow older.

The capacity to suffer varies more than anything that I have observed in human nature. It is not a subject to argue about, but a fact that must be recognized. Apart from Saints like my sister Lucy and my cousin Nan

¹ Hazlitt writes : " As the lark ascends from its low bed on fluttering wing, and salutes the morning skies, so Mr. Wordsworth's unpretending muse, in russet guise, scales the summits of reflection, while it makes the round earth its footstool and its home ! "

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Tennant, who give up their lives, their money, their service, and their prayers in alleviating the sorrows of the world, the *majority* of mankind only suffers the sorrows that are connected with their own family, and their own affairs ; and there is nothing rarer in life than to meet with disinterested emotion. Doubtless some people are born freer, braver, and better equipped for sorrow and resignation than others, and some are born so light of feeling and thin of thought that they remain unchanged after every blow that Fate can bring them. But speaking for myself, I think when Death comes between you and a close companionship, compelling influence, and enduring Love, life's asides are over, and you are always alone.

Young people have no associations : no echoes come to them of former days. They can see fresh flowers put on new graves without the knowledge of faded ones pressed between the leaves of treasured books ; they can watch sailing swans without recalling lovely walks upon the banks of a river ; they can listen to speeches without remembering fine oratory that moved great men ; and there are many things that they can hear and see with interest, but without emotion.

Age must fight in silence—and alone.

* * * * *

Though the library at Glen was full of priceless first editions of unread books, there were many strange volumes that my sisters and I dipped into. Chronicles of crime and witchcraft, obscure Memoirs, Lavater's "Physiognomy," Beckford's "Vathek," Jean Jacques Rousseau, "Sandford and Merton," and "The Fairchild Family"¹ absorbed our interest ; and the Scottish climate gave us endless opportunities for reading. We had long relegated Kingsley, Marryat, Charlotte Yonge, and A. L. O. E. to the high shelves in our schoolroom ; and though we *thought* we were familiar with George

¹ Written by Mrs. Sherwood.

Eliot, Thomas Carlyle, and Charlotte Brontë, we knew little about them. I must confess to my shame, that when I read the "Pickwick Papers" I did not appreciate the genius of Dickens.¹

I have always regretted this, as my husband and men as different from him as Burne-Jones—as well as *most* of the children that I have known—have delighted in him. But Dickens is an author that should be read when you are either older, or younger than I was when I was given the "Pickwick Papers." Though Dickens was a great creative genius, the personages in his novels are not the human beings that I have met, and Dickens was tempted to exploit the characters that he created as you might run film stars upon the screen. There is all the difference between characters, and character-parts, and he over-emphasizes his character-parts in the same way as caricaturists put big heads on little bodies, in the hope that what they draw will be diverting. Personally, I never smile at this kind of caricature, as what is grotesque is often painful, and—with the exception of Max Beer-bohm—no artist who draws big heads on small bodies amuses me.

I think it was Chesterton who said that Dickens—when a little boy—always went to bed too late : an admirable explanation of his rather melodramatic sense of humour and of pathos.

No one at Glen took much interest in what we *knew*, or what we *wanted* to know—much less in what we read,—and it was only after Lord Napier of Ettrick drove over the Border to visit Glen that my reading received a check.

Observing me tucked up upon a sofa reading "Tristram

¹ There is nothing in Dickens that can compare with what Burne-Jones told Lady Horner of an incident that occurred to him in his travels. He was walking through a small provincial town in France, and passed a shop with paint-boxes, brushes, and bad pictures in the window. Over the shop was printed :

<i>Resemblance frappante :</i>	4 frcs.
<i>Resemblance ordinaire :</i>	3 frcs.
<i>Air de famille :</i>	2 frcs.

Shandy," he warned my mother that it was imprudent of her not to supervise my reading. I was outraged by his interference, and when my mother—who only cared for chronicles upon gardening—remonstrated with me, I hid the works of Sterne and Ouida under the pillow of my bed.

It was only when Herbert Gladstone,¹ and Ernest Beckett² gave me "Wuthering Heights," and "Richard Feverel," in 1881 that I ever heard of Emily Brontë, or of George Meredith, and after this introduction I entered upon a new world of fiction.

My father knew nothing of our intellectual struggles. Though a man of many tastes, his ear for music was impartial, and his knowledge of literature limited. He denounced all the modern books with which he was unfamiliar; praised "the classics"—(whatever this may mean)—and read in a quivering voice long passages from Grattan's speeches, Pitt, Burke, and "To Mary in Heaven." Awed by his selections, we were not moved by his emotion, and after observing the impassive expression on our mother's quiet countenance it was not surprising that we fidgeted about upon our chairs, and watched our brothers sorting their salmon flies.

My father and I had so much in common of temperament and intelligence, that it is difficult for me to estimate the precise value of his brains. Like many men who have made fortunes in the City, he was not intellectual; yet he was a man of intellect. His impetuosity, vitality, industry, freshness of outlook, and profound belief in the perfectibility of human nature, gave him an advantage over men of smaller courage. A man of amazing energy, he never had a valet or a secretary, and thought nothing of travelling up one night to London and returning the next to Scotland. The only place that he could count upon for more than a few hours of peaceful sleep was in the train; and what his friends thought a fatiguing folly, he knew was a refreshing reprieve.

¹ Viscount Gladstone.

² Lord Grimthorpe.

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With the exception of myself and my father, I have never met anyone who made sleep their servant, to order and obey, at any, and at *all* times. No one can dogmatize upon the mystery of sleep; but in the same way as the appetite is increased by eating, a desire to sleep grows by sleeping, and in my experience most people eat, drink, and sleep too much. When well-fed, middle-aged friends tell me that they cannot sleep, and I know—by trying to find them on the telephone—that they are never called before 9.30 in the morning, I take no further interest in their symptoms. Men and women who eat and drink too much can *always* sleep. The people of most intellect, determination and character that I have known, have been independent of sleep, and it would be wise for parents to bring up their family—however delicate—without curtains to their windows. Light and air fortify the nerves and engender health, and I have often regretted that I was not told this in my youth, as for many years I was so sensitive to light that I wore a black bandage over my eyes when I went to bed, and when someone lit a candle—however silently in my room—I woke up shivering. There is a subtle difference between insomnia and lack of sleep, and I have often lain awake half the night without any feeling of fatigue the next morning.

The daily habits of the body of conventional persons are as impossible to dislodge as the prejudices of confined and sensitive minds, and if you are brought up to think you must sleep nine hours out of the twenty-four, acute apprehension is added to your wakefulness if you have only slept six. The doctors of to-day invariably prescribe “rest” for patients who complain of sleeplessness, but to my thinking this is an error, as I have never met anyone after the age of twenty-five whose nerves and health were not improved by work. I am writing about what I know, as for three years I suffered mental and physical anguish, and was reduced to the weight of under seven stone through insomnia, and prayed in St. Paul’s Cath-

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dral that I might die rather than hamper my husband when in 1908 he became Prime Minister.

It is too long and personal a story to go into the causes of my insomnia, but I was cured by the devotion and wisdom of two great doctors ; first by Sir John Williams, and later by Sir Thomas Parkinson ; and thanks to their advice, I made a careful study of my own, and other people's health, and since then I have been able to withstand the lure and luxury of sleep.

Life is short ; death is long ; and I see no reason why half our lives should be spent in bed.

* * * * *

Although my father was a bad sleeper and immersed in business, he took every opportunity of being in the country ; but neither his wife nor his children were ever certain of the date of his arrival. We looked forward with the greatest excitement to his visits to Glen, as we knew that all lessons would be abandoned, and that we would either carry his golf clubs in the wet grass of the low ground, or spend the day with him and our brothers on the moor.

My mother shared our delight in these homecomings ; as apart from her matrimonial devotion, she hated the City, knew nothing of banks, bulls, or bears, and only longed for her husband to have more leisure and more repose. His irascibility of temper, and mixture of storm and sunshine—without in any way upsetting her—made her apprehensive about his health, and I can hardly recall a day spent in their company when she did not say to him :

“ Calm yourself, Charlie ; there is no necessity for you to get excited.”

I remember being surprised when, in later years, an influential business man told me that my father's temper was as cool and collected in the City as it was hot and incalculable in Mayfair. But you may have a hot temperament without having a bad temper ; and though



**Sir Charles Tennant, Lady Oxford's father,
practising golf in the fields at Glen**

on trifling occasions my father was over-excited, everyone of any insight knew that ultimately they could rely upon his generous and forgiving temper.

There is nothing more difficult to gauge than what will upset your fellow-creatures, and tantrums make cowards of us all. To be cursed by your partner for playing badly at golf, cards, or tennis, is fatal to enjoyment, and I do not think that intelligent people would waste so much of their time in playing games, were it not for the psychological pleasure they take in the study of men's motives, manners and tempers.

My earliest lover—Peter Flower—was a man of no occupation except buying horses, boxing, gambling, and keeping himself physically fit. But like most idle people, he was always engaged, and hated to be kept waiting, and upon a rare occasion when I was unpunctual I watched him smash a Chippendale mirror, an antique chest, and a valuable chair in my London boudoir.

Sir Edmund Gosse had a brittle social temper, and having a childish love of fine people, responded with venom to any slur upon his swells. I saw Lord Russell of Killowen get purple in the face one day at lunch when he was handed a rice pudding without cream ; and I heard the most amiable member of Parliament shout " Assassin ! " in the middle of an eloquent oration made by O'Brien—the Irish member—upon his return to the House of Commons after a long term of imprisonment.

Innocent criticisms of my own—when repeated—have roused the fury of my friends : and I have received letters from Mary Gladstone, Lady Frances Balfour, and other women, of such an intemperate character that, were I to publish them, people would wonder why I ever spoke to them again.

The worst-tempered friend that I ever had was Sir William Eden. Vigorous, clever, and a fine rider, I saw him fling himself upon the floor at Windlestone, when, as a Master of Foxhounds, he was told that

strangers had been seen riding over the newly sown seeds of his favourite farmer.

Mr. Gladstone told my husband that of all the men he had presided over in his many Cabinets, Lord Rosebery¹ was the most difficult, but Sir William Harcourt had the most incalculable temper, and a man of more kindness of nature than Sir William Harcourt I have never met. A bad temper to be effective, should give a man authority ; people should nudge one another as a warning when they see clouds gathering on the face of a colleague or companion ; but in Sir William Harcourt's case I am told that a sigh of boredom went round the table when he became intemperate at the meetings of the Cabinet.

Temperers have changed in fashion and quality in the last fifty years. In early novels women suffered from the "vapours," a mixture of vanity, modesty and nerves, which caused them to swoon. Nowadays females are made of tougher fibre, and from what we have read of their swimming, shooting, and aeroplaning, women can easily compete with any of the rival sex in courage, competence, and insensibility.

But whether because there is less drinking, more out-of-door games, and more hard work among the rich, or that young men of fashion have less temperament, I cannot say, but violent explosions in high society of incontrollable tempers are seldom seen to-day.

It takes one back to the eighteenth century to witness what I once saw in Rotten Row when Mrs. Langtry was the centre of social excitement.

"The Jersey Lily"—as Mrs. Langtry was called—had Greek features, a transparent skin, arresting eyes, fair hair, and a firm white throat. She held herself erect,

¹ In Lord Crewe's life of Rosebery he quotes Gladstone saying in 1895 :

1. "He is one of the very ablest men I have known.
2. "He is of the highest honour and probity.
3. "I do not know whether he really has common sense."

refused to tighten her waist, and to see her walk was as if you saw a beautiful hound set upon its feet. It was a day of conspicuous feminine looks and the miniature beauties of to-day would have passed with praise, but without emotion. The Princess of Wales (Queen Alexandra), the Empress of Austria, Lady Dalhousie, the Duchess of Leinster, Lady de Grey, Lady Londonderry, Mrs. Cornwallis-West, Mrs. Wheeler, the Duncombes, Cunninghames, Grahams, and Moncrieffes, dazzled every London drawing-room. But with the exception of Georgiana, Countess of Dudley, no one in my lifetime has excited the same excitement and attention as Mrs. Langtry.

Lady Dudley's looks were of European fame, and I can still remember when riding in Rotten Row, joining the crowd that collected in front of her barouche to see the lovely Countess of Dudley. She did not ride, but sat erect with the indifference of an Oriental, under a brown holland umbrella which she held over her elderly husband.

Mrs. Langtry was new to the public, and photographs of her exhibited in the shop windows made every passer-by pause to gaze at them. My sister—Chartie Ribblesdale—told me that she had been in a London ballroom where several fashionable ladies had stood upon their chairs to see Mrs. Langtry come into the room.

In a shining top-hat, and skin-tight habit, she rode a chestnut thoroughbred of conspicuous action every evening in Rotten Row. Among her adorers were the Prince of Wales, (King Edward) and the present Earl of Lonsdale.

One day, when I was riding, I saw Mrs. Langtry—who was accompanied by Lord Lonsdale—pause at the railings in Rotten Row to talk to a man of her acquaintance. I do not know what she could have said to him, but after a brief exchange of words, Lord Lonsdale jumped off his horse, sprang over the railings, and with clenched fists hit Mrs. Langtry's admirer in the face. Upon this, a free fight ensued, and to the delight of the

surprised spectators, Lord Lonsdale knocked his adversary down.

The Earl of Lonsdale—then, as now—was a man who never did anything by halves, and has always been as ready and plausible with his tongue as he was handy and competent with his fists. Generous, sanguine, and full of native shrewdness, he has been the hero of many fabulous tales, and we might say of him—as we could of a first-rate motor—that he was a self-starter, who had always exceeded the speed limit. He has perfect manners, loves publicity and display, and has been rewarded by a personal popularity all over these islands only inferior to that felt, and given, to the members of our Royal Family.

His achievement in knocking his adversary out that morning in Hyde Park caused an uproar in London society, and for many weeks no other subject was discussed.

Can any of us see such an incident occurring in Rotten Row, or in any other public park, to-day? The sexes are supposed to be equal, and I dare say we shall live to read in the newspapers of some of our great women swimmers, women flyers, and women shots, knocking down a new Lord Lonsdale, but I warn them that they will have their work cut out for them.

CHAPTER II

THEN AND NOW

IT is the fashion in this generation to sneer at the Antimacassar morals of Queen Victoria, and the Edwardians, and say that they lived in an age of dullness and respectability. Many volumes of inaccurate gossip, and little literary merit, have been published to prove this, but nothing can be farther from the truth. London Society was just as frivolous, ignorant, callous, and inaccurate in the 'eighties as it is now ; but where to-day are the distinguished leaders both in politics and in fashion who forgathered in Devonshire House, Grosvenor House, Dorchester House, Lansdowne House, and Stafford House ? People will say : " Oh ! These houses are sold and their owners too poor to entertain." But it is not the houses, but the *individuals* that you go to see. Where are the fine manners and originality of men like the old Dukes of Westminster, Beaufort, Devonshire, and Sutherland, the Lords Granville, Ribblesdale, Spencer, Pembroke, and Cowper, to mention only a few of those we met ? There are several owners of beautiful houses who entertain us to-day but—with a few exceptions—they do not take a conspicuous part in public affairs, or exercise a dominating influence over society.

Among the young women there was more intellectual ambition, more sense of adventure, and much more originality in the West End of London in my youth than there is to-day : and when you consider that women can plead in Courts of Law, speak in the House of Commons, and preach in pulpits, I am amazed that they have only achieved distinction in swimming, shoot-

ing, and flying. Nor do I think that the sloppiness shown over social slips—men who boast of their conquests with women, men who do not kiss but tell, and men who cheat at cards—has made the present age shine over that of Queen Victoria or King Edward. Disreputability may sound advanced and gay, but it is like noise without sound, and nothing is more ultimately dull.

I am proud to have lived my youth in an era of public prosperity, private enterprise, political conviction, and industrial romance. Poorly paid as were the agricultural labourers, they had large families of which more than one member had the courage to go to the most distant parts of the world to risk their fate and try their fortune. There were men of character in commerce ; men who built bridges, pierced tunnels, discovered gold-mines, and did not depend upon the safe shelter of the State. Co-operation is not as courageous as competition, and for the moment the whole world seems to be quaking with fear. Even if my day had not been one of prosperity, no Government would have been permitted to increase and maladminister a dole. That a dole was necessary after the War no one will deny ; but it needed a Government of more knowledge of the British public and foresight to finance and inaugurate it, and I have never seen a measure passed in Parliament which has had more disastrous consequences on the energies and morale of this country.

The stagnation of trade, and failure of finance are problems that confront the whole world to-day, but they will not be solved by bribes to the electorate ; and before this book is printed, public opinion will force whatever Government is in power to deal drastically with the dole, or “unemployment benefit” as they prefer to call it.¹

¹ Everything I have written in this book upon politics, and politicians, was written before the crisis of August, 1931, and the General Election of October, 1931. Little did I think when I wrote upon

Everyone has a different theory as to what should be done to-day, but the favourite—and the most foolish—is some form of Protection—a remedy which has been marked by failure in every country where it has been tried, and I never thought to see it rear its ugly head again. The Tory tariff mind is impenetrably stupid. For an island to blockade its own ports, raise prices, kill shipping, and invite reprisals from foreign countries seems to me the conception of an imbecile, and even countries who can feed their own population have not prospered with Protection. I do not pretend to understand currency questions, but tariffs—plus reparations—seem to be mainly responsible for the European financial congestion to-day. The test of a successful Government lies in its freedom, friendliness and order, and not in its riches, and you have only to look at the condition of the United States to see the crime and corruption that have followed her astonishing prosperity. When the Spartans at the height of their glory consulted the oracle of Delphi, they asked if there was anything that could ever hurt Sparta. The oracle replied: “Yes: Prosperity.”

The true value of money has never been properly conceived by nations, or by individuals. The world is composed of money-makers, money-savers, money-spenders, money-lenders, and money-givers, and I wonder which of all these get the most pleasure or profit out of life. Doubtless the anonymous authors who have set our copy-books would say “the money-givers;” but I am not certain that they would be right. Unless you are very smug, the pleasure of giving must be dimmed by knowing—if you are rich—that it entailed no sacrifice on your part, therefore you do not derive the same inner satisfaction out of giving. I am inclined to think that out of this list the *money-makers* derive the most pleasure.

The passion for collecting money is as great an excitement “the dole” that it would incidentally lead to the downfall of the Labour Government, the formation of the Coalition, and the revival of the Liberal Party.

ment and absorption to some people as painting pictures, sculpting statues, or composing oratorios, and I have seen sensible men give up sport, books, liberty, and leisure to collect money, as one might collect stamps, clocks, china or illuminated manuscripts. I have seen rich men staggering under suit-cases rather than pay a porter, and delicate women haggling in a hail-storm rather than pay a taxi-man sixpence beyond his fare. I have seen speculators become convicts ; maidservants become millionaires ; millionaires become megalomaniacs ; and we are all familiar with the man of great possessions who turned sorrowfully away when he heard Christ's saying. Doubtless money has a certain power. Wealthy men impress hotel-keepers, stock-brokers, servants, and society ; but most of those that I have known, are in a perpetual state of nervous preoccupation, and it is pathetic to see them harnessed to a life that brings them neither fun, friends, nor freedom.

Voltaire writes : "*J'aime l'argent parce que j'aime la liberté*," but this is not true of the wealthy men that I have known. Those who devote their lives to money-making have no liberty. Their lives are feverish, their relations are importunate, and such holidays as they are able to spend with their wives and children resemble the frolics of a goat tethered to a post.

I have known a few remarkable men who have made fortunes, and veritable idiots who have done the same, and though you may possess money, unless you are very careful, it is apt in the long run to possess you. There is a romance about self-made men which seldom goes with men of inherited fortunes ; but with a few exceptions they are not the men you would most like to live with, and I have arrived at the definite conclusion that if it takes talent to make money, it takes genius to spend it. Rich Press proprietors, we are told, have power ; but have they ? They can shout with the crowd to sell in the streets, but I doubt if in the long run they have any permanent political influence.

A friend of mine was sitting after dinner with women of fortune who were discussing the terrible taxation which hampered their activities. The richest said she could not afford to spend the money she was spending on her new house, and complained of the "bankers, decorators, cheats, and beggars." In an interval of this outburst, the only woman of moderate means said :

"How glad I am that I am not as poor as you all feel."

In the statistics of "suicide while temporarily insane" you will find there are a few men who kill themselves from jealousy or unrequited love, and some who take their lives from dread of public scandal ; but the bulk of mankind commit suicide from fear of loss, or love of money. There is nothing more unremunerative than concentrating all your energies on making money, and there is an Italian proverb which I recommend to my rich friends : "There are no pockets in shrouds."

During the War my husband said :

"In the real interest of our future the best thing would be if at the end of the War, we could say we had taken, and gained nothing, and I say this not merely from a moral, but a practical point of view."¹ It is quite possible that the Americans to whom—as Mr. Desmond MacCarthy slyly observed—"we owe so much," may live to agree with my husband, but for the moment America is not a country to emulate, and wants a Siegfried to relieve it of its gold.

In connexion with the United States, she seems to be going through times almost as difficult as ours, and money apart, I never understand why, with her fine

¹ My husband's saying has proved tragically true. Writing to-day, November 16, 1931, I am living in a wave of almost reckless economy. Great houses closed, pictures disposed of, racing-stables sold, servants discharged, and "Buy British" illuminated across Trafalgar Square. It is the Paradise of screws, and seems to me fraught with danger. It may be inevitable, but English country life as I have known it will disappear, and money of necessity pass into the hands of vulgar speculators and company promoters.

school of law, there seems to be so little respect for the Bench. "Beachcomber"—a humorist with a flavour of his own—quoted an American who said :

"In our country we've got the finest judges money can buy."

Apart from what pessimists call our national bankruptcy, we are living in an age of inconspicuous public figures, little matrimonial sacrifice, terror on the Stock Exchange, and economy in high places.

The only way you can be sure that what is called "the London Season" has begun is when you see that most of the streets in the popular thoroughfares have been taken up, and your nerves are upset by the noise of early workmen and the knowledge that your taxi will have to make a considerable detour before you can arrive in time for any appointment. But there is no reason to suppose that a crowded London, and private entertainments will compensate you for these disadvantages.

In every age there has been a great deal of silliness in high society, and from the earliest writing upon decipherable stones, scholars tell us that Egyptian Kings deplored the demoralizing changes that had taken place between their childhood, and their reigns. But it is a mistake to think that dullness and economy among the rich engender happiness and thrift among the poor. Entertaining is not extravagance : it is the only way of meeting different people in different worlds, and often promotes new friendships and a profounder knowledge of human nature. There is no envy in this country by the lower for the upper classes, and money spent upon flowers, fruit, motors, meat, clothes and houses encourages farmers, florists, fruiterers, dressmakers, servants, shopkeepers and mechanics, and in the end brings more enterprise in the factories, more enthusiasm among the gardeners, more business to the house agents, and more universal occupation and happiness. An atmosphere of movement and gaiety is healthy and infectious, and everything in life should be done to encourage it.

Although Queen Victoria had dedicated herself to an interminable mourning, we were commanded to appear at Court Balls, Court Concerts, and many famous entertainments to meet friends and foreigners both within the walls, and in the gardens of Buckingham Palace. She did everything she could to encourage music and the stage, and both operas and plays were privately performed in her presence at Windsor Castle. She knew precisely what her subjects liked and expected of her, and though she did not desire amusement for herself, she did not impose dullness upon other people. Queen Victoria was a woman of personality, who surrounded herself with first-rate counsellors, and above all, she believed in upholding the importance and dignity of the Court. The Royal entertainments—which she delegated to the beautiful Princess of Wales—enforced social scruples, encouraged fine manners, and bred a kind of enterprise, elegance and distinction which are lacking in society to-day.

When I made my debut, a London ballroom was a beautiful sight, and neither the movements nor the faces of those that dance the "Charleston" and the "Black bottom" are as joyous or refined as those that we watched when dancing to the perfect rhythm and lovely music of a Strauss valse. In the London Seasons of my time everyone wanted to meet their friends, and I do not think that "night clubs," "cocktails," and the "bottle and pyjama" parties of to-day are a happy exchange for the entertainments given in my youth to meet cultured and interesting people. Lack of money you will be told is the reason for this ; but the men and women most worth meeting can always be entertained at small cost, and it is not among the rich that they have ever forgathered. It is a classical complaint that the age that is past was superior to the one we live in, and no one can doubt that motor-ing, broadcasting, aeroplaning, science, surgery and machinery, have made this a remarkable age ; but when History comes to be written, the present era is one of

standardized mediocrity compared to those of Queen Victoria and King Edward. The nineteenth century produced great poets, great doctors, great divines, great actors, great beauties, great politicians, writers, scientists, and men of authority. There is no Simpson, Lister, or Jenner ; no Queen Alexandra, Duchess of Leinster, or Lady Dudley ; no Darwin, Kelvin, Tennyson, or Browning ; no Bright, Disraeli, Salisbury, Chamberlain, Gladstone, Magee, or Asquith to-day ; and though Lord Hugh Cecil, Lord Buckmaster, and Lord Grey of Falldon are orators of rare and high distinction, they do not speak often enough on public platforms to be well known to the ordinary man in the street. There are many good actors ; but we have not got a Henry Irving, Ellen Terry,¹ or Beerbohm Tree, and it is the despair of playwrights to find any first-rate young tragedienne in the actresses of the day.

There are no outstanding British figures like Fred Archer the jockey, Arthur Roberts the comedian, Kate Vaughan the dancer, Tom Firr the huntsman, Worth the dressmaker, or Grace the cricketer. This is the more

¹ Since writing this, there has been a controversy over Ellen Terry. I knew her well, and like everyone else adored her ; but though superior to the actresses of to-day, her charm was too abandoned to make her an actress of the calibre of a Duse or a Sarah. Her emotion was one of tears and tenderness—intensely feminine and moving ; but when the appeal had to be imperious, she was not successful, and the only time I ever saw her show genuine passion was when she played Olivia in the *Vicar of Wakefield*. Her greatest failure was when she acted Lady Macbeth. The lovely Ellen could not reproduce a shrewd ambitious Scottish woman irritated by the doughy texture of her husband's nature which drove her to reckless hardness, increasing remorse, and ultimate insanity. There was nothing Northern about Ellen, and when she stood listening at the foot of the Scottish spiral staircase wondering if her murderous ambition had been achieved—beautiful as she looked—she might have been waiting to wish her husband a merry Christmas.

Our present-day actresses mouth their lines and have little dignity, and I have seen competent performers do minor parts, such as the Queen in *Hamlet*, as if they were presiding over a Dover Pageant.

surprising, as there is more propaganda, more money given in prizes, and more Press headlines to make men famous to-day than there were in my youth.

With the exception of Dr. Geikie Cobb, Dr. Hutton, Mr. Marriott (the Rector at North Berwick), can anyone say in what church they will find a great preacher? ¹ And though there are many able and enlightened surgeons, there is no doctor that I know of world-wide celebrity. When you go to the House of Commons or the House of Lords can you be certain of hearing a first-rate debate? Mr. Winston Churchill and Mr. Lloyd George have remarkable Parliamentary talent, but their manœuvres, compromises, and trackless convictions make them an easy prey to men who have an earnest belief in what they want. Members of Parliament will always listen with interest and applaud with vigour all brilliant oratory; but to have fire in your belly is what moves mankind, and neither audacity, fluency, nor rhetoric can permanently influence earnest men who share a common faith.

There is a lack of Faith not only in politics, but in religion, which is more serious. Beliefs that men have worked and died for, are at best matters of airy contemplation to-day, and among the many changes that I have seen in my lifetime none is more conspicuous than the loose hold of the Church of England.² It is not because men and women are more employed, or need more rest that they do not go to church on Sundays; nothing is more restful than listening to good music,

¹ There may be many fine preachers, but as I spend most of my Sundays in the country I have not heard them.

² I went to a fashionable wedding the other day (Lent, 1931) in the country, and congratulated the bride's father after the service upon the way he had arranged the guests in church: "My dear Margot," he replied, "I nailed all your names with my own hand in the pews this morning. The parson said that a hammer was not allowed to be used in churches during Lent, so my fingers are quite sore."

clear reading, or a fine sermon ; they do not go to church because the services are dull. The crushing monotony of the clerical voice has taken all pleasure away from listening to the Lessons, and you will be fortunate if you hear as many as ten fine sermons in a year. The pay is too small to tempt men of intellect or education to go into the Church, and no one but a saint is going to sacrifice himself, or his family, to take Holy Orders to-day.

A desire for changes in the Prayer Book, and the painful wrangles over the Holy Communion service have done nothing to add to the dignity of the Church ; but if the Bench of Bishops would start training schools to teach young parsons how to read, or make a protest against long services and long sermons, the churches would not be empty. I am not a pessimist and there are other changes that I have seen that are more hopeful. Improvement in the conditions of the working man, diminution of drunkenness, better sanitation, and the increased expectation of life. I was told by the head of a big Insurance Company that the expectation of life has increased by twelve years in the last fifty, and certainly "*La femme de trente ans*" would not have made the sensation it did when it was written, if published to-day. Thackeray says that "any woman without an actual hump can marry any man she likes" ; but whether this be true or not, it is certain that women of thirty-five to-day possess as much physical attraction for men as those of twenty-five in my girlhood. Women are not only younger for their age, but have long given up wearing clothes considered suitable to their years.

I remember being told when ordering dresses in Paris for myself and my stepdaughter,¹ that the model I chose was not suitable to my age. The *vendeuse* said :

"*Je regrette de le dire à Madame ; mais il faut abdiquer le rose.*"

Nothing is more conspicuous to-day than the fashion

¹ Lady Violet Bonham Carter.

in clothes worn by elderly women, and with the disappearance of heavy crape, ample skirts, and widow's caps, my sex has preserved a youthful appearance. In other respects female fashions were as capricious in my youth as they will always be ; but in our family, we did not know enough ladies in high society to be influenced by them.

I am always amused when I go to fashionable tableaux, annually undertaken for charitable objects, purporting to represent the dresses worn in the 'eighties. I can truthfully say that the costumes exhibited bear no resemblance to those that any of us wore in London or the country ; and I regret that I have not kept specimens of the fashions in the clothes that were worn from the time I came out in London society to the fashions of the present day. Our family may have been considered advanced, but we wore tweed knickerbockers under short skirts, no hats, and were too fond of games, riding, and the moors, to wear the trailing tails and be-frilled petticoats that are smiled at in the London Tableaux.

Among my father's many tastes he liked clothes, and always noticed what people wore. He was well and appropriately dressed himself, and critical of the appearance of other people. Much against her inclination, my mother had her dresses made by Worth, and there was no money that my father did not love to spend upon valuable lace for her beautiful caps.

I remember her taking some rare and wide Valenciennes lace to Paris hoping that Worth would use it on one of her evening dresses : but Worth said he would never dream of using lace of the kind for anything but sheets.

Old Worth—who had started life as a shop-walker in Swan & Edgar's—was the greatest genius in devising clothes that ever lived. He told me that upon his first visit to France, the dresses were so hideous that he determined to open a shop in Paris to convert the Faubourg frumps and improve the French fashions ; and in a very

short time every woman of distinction ordered her dresses from him.

When I knew him he strutted about in a flowered waistcoat, purple velvet jacket, and black beret—scolding, smiling, and draping various chairs with wonderful brocades ; and all his clients and assistants adored him.

At the time that I was engaged to be married, my mother took me to Paris, and Monsieur Worth made me several beautiful dresses. Knowing that I was devoted to dancing, he devised a rainbow-coloured gauze gown reaching to the floor which he insisted upon giving to me. It was of immense width, but of such soft material that the gauze clung closely to my figure. He superintended every fitting, and when the dress was finished I asked that all the women who had worked upon it should come downstairs and that I would dance to them.

I was a pupil of Kate Vaughan's and Letty Lind's—who both told me I might have been a professional ballet girl—but it is always a little difficult to dance without music.

When M. Worth returned to the fitting-room accompanied by the smiling sempstresses, he held his hands behind his back. Inspired by my beautiful dress and feeling in high spirits, I danced as I had never danced before, and was so busy manipulating the yards of stuff in my ample skirts that I noticed nobody. But when I sat down breathless and excited, I looked round and saw that the room was full of people, and Worth flung an enormous bouquet of artificial roses at my feet.

Not from any form of vanity—as I was never good-looking—but from the eye of an artist, one of the minor pleasures of my life has been clothes. I notice every detail in the clothes worn by men, women, and children ; and in spite of moralists, I never remember the time when I did not attach the greatest importance to manners, deportment, and personal appearance. You have nothing to lose by aiming at some sort of perfection in everything you do, and I think that to walk gracefully, talk clearly,

dress carefully, and look as well as you can, is a duty in life.

When people make an excuse for sloppy clothes, bad food, uncomfortable houses, and untidy hair, by saying they go in for "the simple life," I am reminded of Dr. Johnson's rebuke to the foolish traveller. I quote Boswell.

A learned gentleman expatiated on the happiness of a savage life, and quoted with an air of admiration the reflection of an officer, who had lived some time in the wilds of America, as if it had been deeply philosophical. "Here am I, free and unrestrained, amidst the rude magnificence of Nature, with this Indian woman by my side, and this gun, with which I can procure food when I want it; what more can be desired for human happiness?"

Dr. Johnson: "Do not allow yourself, sir, to be imposed upon by such gross absurdity. It is sad stuff; it is brutish. If a bull could speak, he might as well exclaim,—Here am I with this cow and this grass; what being can enjoy greater felicity?"

Our nurses and governesses were never tired of telling us that it was wrong to think of personal appearance. But from the earliest age all intelligent children like "dressing up," and everyone in the house combines to help them in the process. This is not prompted by any confidence in their personal appearance, or what nurses call "showing off;" it is a laudable desire to impersonate someone more striking than themselves, and lies at the root of all ambition. In my experience I have seen children proud of their achievements in learning, prowess in games, and boastful of their possessions, but I never met children who were vain of their appearance.

The Queen of Spain said to me one day last year,¹ when I was sitting next to her at a musical party, that she was convinced from the way she had observed how long elderly foreign women kept their lovers that looks were merely a good introduction. I replied that personally I valued appearance, and would like to have been beautiful, as I was certain I could have made a good job of it. I thought it a mistake for nurses and governesses to say that beauty is but skin deep.

¹ The year 1930.

There is a great deal of truth in what the Queen of Spain said ; but it is more applicable to foreigners than to English women. Beauty may only be skin deep but the skin is what you first see, and I think it is a sign of stupidity not to care for clothes.

Carlyle writes in "Sartor Resartus" :

"For neither in tailoring nor in legislating does man proceed by mere Accident, but the hand is ever guided on by mysterious operations of the mind."

And Goethe writes in *Faust* :

"'Tis thus at the roaring Loom of Time I ply
And weave for God the garment that thou see'st Him by."

It is what you see people by that makes a first impression. It may be a turn of the head, a movement of the hands, the timbre of a voice, the expression of a face, or the clothes that you wear ; but through the "mysterious operations of the mind" these leave a lasting mark upon the memory.

Clothes are symbols, and symbols are the imaginative signposts of life. The more the outer symbols of Beauty are created and preserved, the more your inner sense will guide you to the heights.

The finest passage among the many purple patches in "Sartor Resartus" is what Carlyle writes upon symbols :

Neither say that thou hast now no Symbol of the Godlike. Is not God's Universe a Symbol of the Godlike : is not Immensity a Temple ; is not Man's History, and Men's History a perpetual Evangel ? Listen, and for organ-music thou wilt ever, as of old, hear the Morning Stars sing together.

CHAPTER III

POLITICS AND THE PRESS

THE Scotland of my youth was conservatively Liberal in her politics ; and backed by a powerful newspaper—*The Scotsman*—she remained uninfluenced by the majority of her great Tory landlords.

Party feeling ran high and hot all over Peebles-shire and Selkirkshire, and from the day my father was returned to Parliament we were all passionately interested in politics. It would have been hard for anyone to have convinced us at that time that men of first class intellect could ever be Tories. We thoroughly understood the people of our soil, as though my mother was English, the Tennant blood was wild and strong. My family came of ancient Scottish stock who started life as farmers, factors, and what are called “ bonnet lairds.” An independent and long-lived race, there had been but six generations in three hundred years until my father died. One David Tennant declined the honour of a knighthood for distinguished service as a privateer in the French Wars, saying : “ And ’deed what would it be but a nick-name.”

Such might have been expected from a son of old John of Glenconner, “ the guid auld Glen ” of Robert Burns, and doubtless brought up in the tradition of :

“ The rank is but the guinea stamp,
The man’s the gowd for a’ that.”

When my father bought the Border property and built the Glen House upon it we were surrounded by Tory landlords, who had been represented in Parliament

for thirty years—as far as I can remember—by a charming old man, Sir Graham Montgomery. That he should have been turned out by a Liberal, and a new-comer, seemed unbelievable, and for some time we were very unpopular in the county. But my father was a man of many tastes and fine character who had neither the smallness nor vanity to harbour resentment, and his large and happy family were too busy with life to notice much that was going on. Nevertheless, after his return to Parliament, added to the political feeling that was roused in the county during the election, every member of the Tennant family became challenging and ardent Liberals. We all read the newspapers, and in those days I thought the Press had an overwhelming influence. Whether rightly or wrongly, I have long since changed my opinion.

In times of war, when nerves are unstrung and Death hangs like a pall over every family, I think that the Press can do little good, but infinite harm. From vanity, or malice, it can publish Cabinet secrets disclosed by unscrupulous politicians which will hamper the Government of the day; it can circulate false rumour; inspire damaging criticism; and it can flatter and advertise its public favourites at the expense of its private opponents. In all wars there are admirals, generals and adventurers who have a fancy for self-advertisement: in consequence of which, pressmen are cajoled, strings are pulled, rivalries are started, duffers are decorated, and quiet men are shelved. No Prime Minister can prevent the promotion of second-rate men in the Army, Navy, or any Department in a war where hosts are killed, and victory appears to recede. In every calamity—from an accident on a cabstand to a European conflict—there are busy-bodies who are convinced that if the saving of the calamity could only be left to *them*, the outcome would be very different; and every Government conducting a great war is a target for well advertised, and ignorant abuse.

But in time of Peace—speaking for myself—I have never observed the power of the Press.

In the General Election of 1905-6, every London newspaper of importance was against us ; nevertheless, the Liberal Party, which had long been out of favour, won a momentous victory with a majority over all other Parties of 356.

When Mr. Lloyd George superseded my husband in 10, Downing Street, Lord Northcliffe owned *The Times*—the most influential newspaper in the world—he also owned many papers in the Provinces which had large circulations. No one will deny that Lord Northcliffe was considered the *greatest* pressman of the day ; nevertheless, from the moment he quarrelled with the leader of the Coalition (a Government which no one respected), all his efforts failed to dislodge him. If anything, Mr. Lloyd George's position was enhanced by the perpetual abuse showered upon him by Lord Northcliffe and his newspapers.

In my own country—Scotland—there are no Socialist newspapers of significance in circulation to-day ; nevertheless, it is the only part of these islands where the Labour Party has increased its influence.

Neither in private, nor in public life, will you gain your object by vituperation ; it arouses a feeling of antagonism, and people ask themselves whether the play is fair, or the abuse justified.

I have been in the Law Courts and seen jurymen remain below stairs for a long time in cases where their verdict should have been obvious and simple, had they not been convinced that the Judge had shown unfairness in his summing-up.

At the moment of writing,¹ the leadership of the Conservative Party is criticized in private circles and challenged by a section of the Press. Recrimination is rife, and every device resorted to in an effort to force Mr. Baldwin to resign. I am so fond of him that I hesitate to criticize, but you must be a Pitt, a Peel, or a Gladstone

¹ March, 1931, when Mr. Duff Cooper beat Lord Beaverbrook's candidate for the St. George's division of Westminster.

to be independent of personal followers, and it is hard on young Conservatives of promise never to have their merits recognized. When my husband was Prime Minister he kept in constant touch with both defeated and prospective candidates, and we entertained most of the Liberal Members of Parliament in 10, Downing Street. He believed in encouraging youth. But in spite of Mr. Baldwin's defects, his subtle mind and sterling character are the greatest assets the Conservative Party possess to-day.

I have lived long enough in the world of politics to see both reigning and defeated Prime Ministers targets for abuse, but none of us has seen two rich newspaper proprietors aim at splitting the Protectionist Party—which they profess to belong to—by financing candidates of their own in by-elections without suggesting an alternative to the leader they wish to destroy. It may be that they are too modest, but it would be more amusing for their readers if they would compete with one another for the place, as the cleverest newspapers become unreadable if they are channels for reiterated personal abuse.

The average British voter is, I am convinced, a man of level head, and we are a nation of whom the majority has a sound political instinct, and, above all, *a love of fair play*.

* * * * *

My first political excitement was experienced in 1880 during the Midlothian campaign. My father was a manufacturer and represented the St. Rollox division of Glasgow in the House of Commons, and when Mr. Gladstone went to address an audience in Glasgow, the party organizer asked my father if he would entertain Mrs. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, and other people of importance in our grandfather's house.

Although the fortune and foundation of the Tennant family were started in the city of Glasgow, we had seldom been there and knew little of the inhabitants, and less of the conditions of that great city.

Looking back to-day, I think that my country would never have turned against Liberalism had it not been for the selfishness and short-sightedness of the rich industrialists both in Glasgow and elsewhere in Scotland ; and after my husband became the Member for Paisley, I could hardly sleep for thinking of the misery I had seen in the slums of Glasgow, and the joyless conditions of men and women living on the Clyde. But during the Midlothian campaign I knew nothing of the pathos, but only the prosperity, of the city of Glasgow.

Our grandfather's house was of imposing exterior, solidly built, and of fine grey stone ; but the decoration, furniture, and pictures, were handsome, heavy, and dull.

In connexion with this house, Sir Harry MacGowan told me that when a boy he had taken important papers for my father to examine when he was staying in West George Street after the death of my grandfather. Standing in the front hall, my father glanced hastily at the papers which Sir Harry had brought, and dismissed the errand boy : at which the old housekeeper nudged him, and said :

"Gie the poor laddie a shilling."

In later years "the poor laddie" became the Chairman of a company that bought my grandfather's house, and by his sagacity and enterprise, Sir Harry MacGowan has become the man of influence and fortune that he is to-day.

* * * * *

It is impossible to exaggerate the excitement and enthusiasm caused by Mr. Gladstone's electoral campaign in Midlothian. Lord Balfour writes on page 123 of his "Chapters of Autobiography" :

The centre of electoral interest at the moment was Midlothian, where Lord Dalkeith was engaged in a gallant but hopeless struggle with Mr. Gladstone, and was in urgent need of all the help he could obtain. It is true that the mere number of his fellow-workers could make little difference in the result. No shoal of minnows, however numerous, could lash the surface of the political ocean into foam in rivalry with this particular whale. But we—the

minnows—had to do our best ; and as I was a Scotsman, as I belonged to the Lothians, as I had recently spoken in Edinburgh, and (best of all) as I was a successful Conservative candidate when successful Conservative candidates were few, my help was warmly welcomed. I need scarcely add that it was quite ineffectual.

Farther on (p. 128) Lord Balfour explains that the swing of the pendulum was hardly sufficient to account for the electoral disaster of 1880 which was a matter of surprise to the coolest heads in the Conservative Party, and he adds :

This, I find in *personality*—in the personality of one man, Mr. Gladstone . . . he had oftener than not, exercised an individual influence in the country greater, I believe, than any of his Parliamentary predecessors except William Pitt.

My father being a passionate admirer of Mr. Gladstone, we were all brought up to look upon him as a god, and I can never remember—except in a *Punch* cartoon, called “The Dizzy Brink”—ever hearing the name of his rival—Disraeli.

One evening my sister Laura and I were sitting in the Glen schoolroom when we were told that our father wished us to go with him to Glasgow and attend Mr. Gladstone’s meeting in St. Andrew’s Hall. He said he wanted us to hear the greatest orator that had ever lived, so that in days to come we would be able to tell our grandchildren of the event.

To Border-bred children every city is an excitement, and we were sleepless at the thought of going to the Glasgow meeting : we were not only to hear the great Mr. Gladstone speak, but Lord Rosebery was to be our guest.

The young man of whom everyone was thinking, writing, and talking, was the late Earl of Rosebery, and from the North to the South of Scotland he was a hero and a king. When it was known that he was to be our guest, the front door of my grandfather’s house was besieged by photographers and reporters, and maid-

servants peeped from every window to look at the crowds collected in the streets.

We were not allowed to dine downstairs, but while we were putting on our Sunday dresses for the meeting, Lord Rosebery came into our bedroom and gave us grapes and chocolates. We were thrilled by his appearance, but did not share his amusement when we saw him smiling at the nursery-maid hooking up our dresses at the back and dragging our hair off our foreheads. We begged him to stay, but he told us that he had to hurry off to the Lord Provost's house to join his Chief, as he was taking the chair at all Mr. Gladstone's meetings.

Sitting on the platform in St. Andrew's Hall surrounded by every kind of distinguished person, and various members of Parliament, Laura and I were breathless and tingling with excitement.

There was an organ recital before the arrival of Mr. Gladstone and his Chairman, and we gazed with rapture at the blue and yellow bunting, floating banners, and Liberal mottoes, that decorated every part of the hall. Rosetted ushers stood like sentinels on the floor and in the galleries, examining tickets, and marshalling the eager public into their appointed places.

When Mr. Gladstone and his youthful Chairman appeared upon the platform, it seemed as if the thunder of cheers would only cease when the roof had fallen in. Men and women scrambled on to their seats waving hats and handkerchiefs and Laura and I hardly dared to look at one another for fear of bursting into tears.

It was the first time we had ever seen Mr. Gladstone, or listened to any great orator ; and I can truly say it was the last time that I heard two such sonorous and beautiful voices as those of Mr. Gladstone and Lord Rosebery.

* * * * *

It is perhaps not inappropriate here to mention some of the great, and less great speakers, all of whom—with the exception of Disraeli—I have heard address audiences

from public platforms and in both Houses of Parliament ; and I only wish that I had collected and written down at the time the opinions of my political friends upon their various merits.

When I first sat in the Speaker's Gallery of the House of Commons, among the young men of promise were George Curzon, and George Wyndham, who were both friends of mine. Of the two, George Wyndham seemed to attract the House by his speeches more than Curzon, and I well remember John Morley saying to me that he would certainly be the future Tory Prime Minister. Though personally fond of George Wyndham, I thought him too copious, complacent, and fluent a speaker to impress the quiet opinion of his fellow-Members for long ; and as time wore on, I observed something of Mr. Bennet's¹ attitude when he checked his daughter's singing by saying "My dear, you have delighted us long enough" when George Wyndham got up to address the House. But it was not from any failing in oratory that Wyndham's political prestige waned.

After he became Chief Secretary for Ireland, he was convinced that no country can be permanently governed by force, and he and his Chief did not see eye to eye. If my husband, or Mr. Gladstone, had been his Chief instead of Arthur Balfour, Wyndham's political career would not have terminated so suddenly. I do not say this because my husband and Mr. Gladstone were Home Rulers, and would therefore have been in sympathy with George Wyndham's difference with his Chief, but because Arthur Balfour had the whole Cabinet behind him, and, in spite of his devotion and loyalty to his Chief Secretary—with whom he had every tie of personal affection—could not have gone beyond the concerted opinion of the Government of the day.

I had more faith in the future of George Curzon ; but as I am writing about him farther on in this book, I will only say that his admirable sense of humour, industry,

¹ "Pride and Prejudice."

and resource—if a little marred by an assumed contempt for the intelligence of his fellow-Members—made a lasting impression upon me.

The Irish Members were—like all Celts—born orators. Sexton was copious, Dillon bored me, Healy¹ was unexpected and full of wit ; but it was Parnell who excited curiosity and had the most arresting personality. He was not an Irishman, nor was he a good speaker, but his almost Christ-like countenance, impenetrable distinction, and chilling aloofness, never failed to arouse the attention of the House. He is one of the men I regret not having known, as my husband defended him before the “ Parnell Commission ” and from all he has told me he must have been a curious and incalculable creature.

Sir William Harcourt should have lived in the eighteenth century ; he was always clever, gay, and coarse ; Lord Randolph Churchill was brilliant and insolent, but I never heard him at the height of his fame, as when I knew him the Fourth Party had disrupted, and Lord Randolph had resigned.²

On our side of the House I should say that after Mr.

¹ Healy said when he heard that a friend of his was going to be married, “ He has doubled his admirers.”

² Mr. Birrell told me this story of Lord Randolph Churchill :

“ Although I had few opportunities of meeting Lord Randolph outside the House of Commons, he told me something that lingers in my memory. It must have been told me some time in June or July, 1889, but though the incident referred to, occurred in 1886 or 1887 (immediately after Lord Randolph’s sudden resignation of his office of Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Leader of the House of Commons), his eyes, as he told me about it, sparkled with mirth and mischief. Goschen, it may still be remembered, got the Treasury job, and the sober-minded Mr. W. H. Smith, of bookstall celebrity, became Leader of the House. Shortly after these dramatic occurrences, Lord Randolph espying Mr. Smith sitting alone in the Lobby went up to him and speaking in a tone of grateful effusiveness, said :

“ ‘ Oh, dear Mr. Smith, how can I congratulate both you, and myself, upon what has happened ! For months past, sitting as I had to do upon that Front Bench gazing upon the arresting and animated countenance of Mr. Gladstone I was appalled at the

Gladstone, the man that attracted most attention and the largest public was Mr. Joseph Chamberlain ; but like most politicians who leave their parties—unless they are very young—he lost some of his pre-eminence when he joined the Tories. He was always at his ease and sensible to talk to, without a trace of snobbishness or self-consciousness ; but the mechanism of his mind was a little stiff, and his outlook narrow. He never lost his sympathy with the under-dog, and was more at home demolishing dukes than dining with them. He told me he had been a good amateur actor, and had started by preparing his speeches before a looking-glass but had given this up as he disliked gesture—"But," he added, "speeches can have drama without gesture." I observed him closely after this remark, and never saw him make a movement except when he would pause at a well-prepared moment, to look at the clock when addressing the House of Commons.

Some men's minds appear to be sleep-walking, but the pleasure of listening to Joe Chamberlain was that he was always awake, and saw with illuminated clearness the aim and object of his discourse ; and however much he was roused, his speeches were models of calculated and accelerated moderation. I would not call him a great orator, because he could not leave the ground, and such flights as he attempted met with more astonishment than applause. When speaking in the House of Commons after John Bright's death he said :

thought, constantly recurring to me, that ere long—and in the due course of nature—it must fall to my lot to rise in my place, and in a crowded House pronounce a glowing eulogium on that great Parliamentary Figure. My inadequacy for the task both shocked and unnerved me—but now it has fallen into *your* hands !!'

"Lord Randolph, I remember, added the words that he thought he saw an uneasy smile flit across the inexpressive face of Mr. Smith—but this I doubt, for as the new Leader of the House was a complete stranger to 'artistic pangs,' he would have done all that was required without the slightest discomfort. But as it happened, the G.O.M. outlived both Lord Randolph and Mr. Smith."

"Whenever he (John Bright) entered a strange house, if there were a dog or a cat in it, it always came to him directly, and made good friends with him. I think these domestic animals are good judges of character, and I know—I am certain—that theirs was the only popularity which Mr. Bright ever courted."

This is harmless, but on such an occasion true oratory rises to greater heights. Mr. Chamberlain did not know how "to make thoughts sing" (to quote Professor MacMurray) and could never have uttered Mr. Gladstone's splendid phrase, that what he received from his audience in vapour, he poured back upon them in flood. Nevertheless, he had enormous prestige in the country and was the greatest House of Commons man of his day. There was no public hall that he could not fill, and many of us think Mr. Gladstone did not realize his great political and personal qualities.¹

The two speakers that gave me the most pleasure to listen to in my youth—after Mr. Gladstone—were Bishop Magee and the late Lord Salisbury. There was a zealous expectancy about the Bishop's mind—whether he was speaking from the pulpit, or the benches of the House of Lords—that I have rarely seen equalled. The first time that I heard him preach was in St. Margaret's, Westminster, when Mr. Gladstone took me into the Prime Minister's pew. Walking together down St. James's Street, Mr. Gladstone told me that he had asked Magee to preach that morning upon people giving money in their lifetime as he had seen so many foolish wills, and young men kept back in their prospects and professions from not being given a proper share in the fortunes that they were to inherit.

Sitting beside Mr. Gladstone in St. Margaret's, I

¹ I do not think I have given my readers a true account of the admiration and regard I felt for Mr. Joseph Chamberlain. He was a man of deep affections and never deserted a friend. When he was stricken with the illness from which he died, he sent for me. I have written about our conversation in my Autobiography.

listened to one of the greatest sermons ever preached, but can find no record in my diary of the text. There is one which he might have chosen,¹ but I would have remembered it had he done so.

Lord Salisbury's speeches are probably all published, and if it were possible would gain by being read to-day, so whatever I wrote about them would be superfluous ; but he had a fine style of finished English, and the most fastidious, and least prepared sense of humour of any orator that I ever listened to. It was said of one of the most lovable and popular men in the House, that "he was a very good speaker if you did not hear what he said" ; and the same criticism might be made of many others ; but it was less applicable to Lord Salisbury than to most politicians. He appeared to be arrogantly indifferent to his fellow-Peers and stood looking towards the Press Gallery without a note and without a movement. I do not think he ever uttered a dull or commonplace sentence.

In all the debates that I have attended I have never been fortunate enough to hear any very witty interruption, and wish I had been in the House of Lords when Lord Haversham told me their Lordships had been bored to extinction at some copious Peer who usually opened his speeches with :

"And now, my Lords !—I ask myself this question——"

At which, a young peer said in a loud voice :

"And a *damned dull* answer you'll get !"

You will hear it said that oratory is out of fashion, and that the grand style has disappeared. The truth is that we are living in an age of such political confusion, mediocrity, and instability, that few of the prominent speakers of any party know *what* to say. They are there-

¹ "Neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing."—2 Samuel xxiv. 24. This text is not applicable to what Mr. Gladstone wished the Bishop to preach upon, but it applies to wealthy people who think they are making a sacrifice when they give money."

fore hampered by lack of direction and conviction—more than from lack of capacity—from making great orations.

Can anyone deny that Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill have gifts of oratory which not only enliven every debate in which they take part, but should influence every elector?

* * * * *

Here I would like to digress, and say a word upon these two remarkable men in the light of current events.

For personal reasons it is difficult for me to write about Mr. Lloyd George. His nature and character are so different from my own, that I do not think I have ever understood him, and few can do justice in writing of characters they do not understand. Welsh blood, Irish blood—in fact all Celtic blood—are the opposite of Border blood, and I doubt if they can ever become approximated.

When I first knew Mr. Lloyd George I thought him one of the most nimble-witted, most spontaneous and fascinating men I had ever met, and now that political and other circumstances have estranged us, I have not changed my opinion. He has what is rare among politicians of any country to-day—courage, effrontery, eloquence and magnetism. Men of even greater ability seldom combine these four qualities. In spite of an untrained mind—without the advantage of an intellectual, University, classical, or literary education—he has an intelligence of the first order, and his insight into the people he is conversing with makes him almost too quick to take in, or listen to, all they had intended saying to him : they find “their cheques cashed almost before they are presented” as somebody once said to me of another man. I have often regretted my own rapidity of thought as it has hurt my reputation as a listener, but I am as a jelly-fish with a shark in comparison to Mr. Lloyd George. His mercurial mind is always

on the move ; it is not given time to reflect upon the past, or contemplate the future, but adjusts itself like a newly wound clock to the time of day. The same might be said of his political convictions. Convictions no doubt have to be modified or expanded to meet changing conditions, and no one could accuse Mr. Lloyd George of a cross-bench mind ; but to be a reliable political leader sooner or later your anchors must hold fast where other men's drag. This would not matter so much if Mr. Lloyd George's tastes and ambitions ranged over a large field like one of his sincere admirers—Lord Balfour—who was interested in art, sport, society, philosophy, music, and science ; but though I may be wrong, I do not think Mr. Lloyd George is interested in anything as much as politics. For a man with such social gifts of easy access, dexterity, wit in conversation and infectious vitality he is singularly indifferent to the celebrities, idlers and expressionists who compose society and is seldom to be found among them. He likes discussing present-day situations, the men in power, and the future prospects of young Members of Parliament. I remember when I said that I thought a back-bencher on the Conservative benches (who was opposing my husband's Education Bill) was—though seldom entertaining—likely to go far, he replied, "My dear Mrs. Asquith, C—— is far too relevant to be formidable." He was right ; C—— was always relevant, and never formidable, but he ultimately became a Cabinet Minister in the Conservative Government.

What differentiates Mr. Lloyd George from most good talkers is that he is never a monologist and is quite as much interested in you, and your point of view, as he is in himself ; and out of the many ideas and suggestions that he may turn out in the course of conversation you can always rely on taking some of them away when you leave him. His talk is not self-revealing or impersonal like Mr. Birrell's—who in one flash of humorous declamation betrays the whole vigour of his cultivated

and independent personality; or Sir James Barrie's, whose original flights of fancy and whimsy take both you and himself into a different and less worldly atmosphere; or Mr. Desmond MacCarthy's, who does not depend on you, or anyone he is talking to, but is equally thoughtful and brilliant upon whatever topic that is under discussion. Mr. Lloyd George's conversation depends very much on the person he is talking to. Like a billiard player who wins wagers by scoring cannons, he plays backwards and forwards from himself to you, and I have sometimes wondered what he thinks about when he is left completely alone. If you were to lock some people into a room and peep through the key-hole it would be interesting to see how much of them you would find. But although he has met, and known, all the interesting men and women of the day, he is not averse to the company of his inferiors. This is more from lack of fastidiousness than vanity. In the days when I knew him I never found Mr. Lloyd George too vain or too self-scanned to enjoy himself with the people. But there is no greater mistake in life than an inability to measure yourself by a high standard, and you have only to watch the slow decline of men who having lost the confidence of their superiors have resorted to the companionship of their inferiors, and ultimately alienated the respect of their equals.

Brilliant as he always is in Parliament, I may be wrong, but I never thought him a House of Commons man in the sense that Mr. Joseph Chamberlain, my husband, or Lord Grey was. His flights of oratory are more inspired by an audience than a congregation, and he will certainly go down to History as one of the greatest platform speakers of our time. Apart from his outstanding gifts of natural oratory the bed-rock of Mr. Lloyd George's nature is a desire to help those who from poverty, misfortune, or lack of courage, are unable to help themselves. From his early youth until he became entangled with Ireland, the War, and foreign

affairs, his heart has been set on ameliorating the lot of what—in vulgar parlance—is called “the under-dog,” the majority of whom compose every audience ; he is therefore in closer touch when speaking from platforms in halls and theatres than from a front or back bench in the House of Commons. This is a new House of Commons, and though the majority is drawn from the Conservative Party, it is as I see it in no sense a “Die-hard” House. I should say there is a great deal of Liberalism among most of the present Members. It therefore does not give Mr. Lloyd George—speaking from where he does—the opportunities of attack upon opponents to which he has always been accustomed.

Some men are knights, some gladiators and others prize-fighters in the arena, and whichever of these he may be, Mr. Lloyd George has always been a fighter. But to-day we are at peace, and men of all parties must sacrifice themselves and in the interests of their country stand shoulder to shoulder. This, Mr. Lloyd George has never understood.

In the 1918 General Election he wounded himself and damaged his Party, which showed the sort of near-sighted political chicanery from which he has always suffered. In his desire to attract and electrify the gallery in the theatre of politics he has failed to enlist adherents, and though his political eclipse may be merely temporary his methods have brought him no reward.

* * * * *

Mr. Winston Churchill, while sharing Mr. Lloyd George's qualities of courage, effrontery, eloquence, and magnetism, is a very different person.

He is too absorbed by the panorama of his own thoughts, and the convictions that are constantly being forged and renewed in his lively brain to be really interested in what other people are saying, and unless they attract him by illuminating phrases he pays little attention to

older and possibly wiser men. For him, there are no "elders and betters." He likes heroes. Tom Morley once said to me, "Tell Winston from me that he should give up his preoccupation over Napoleon and study the drab heroes of life."

There are some people that you cannot change, you must either swallow them whole, or leave them alone. It is no use your saying you could wish this or that were different, so as to counteract certain deficiencies. They would probably say the same themselves, unless they were very complacent—which Mr. Churchill has never been—but you must make up your mind to take them or leave them. You can do something with talent, but nothing with genius, and Mr. Winston Churchill has a touch of—what we all recognize but can never define—Genius. He is unchangeable, irreplaceable and lovable, and is as ardent, vocal, insatiable, and youthful to-day as he was when I first knew him, which as far as I can recollect must be more than twenty years ago.

In some ways cleverer than his father, he has not got such an easy temper with hostile and often irritating hecklers in election campaigns, and though a better speaker—I may be wrong, as I only heard Lord Randolph Churchill late in his meteoric career—I do not think he is as ready in debate as his father was when taken by surprise in the House by interruptions to his carefully prepared orations. To be a great debater you must have parliamentary foresight and a sort of detachment from self, and you will seldom find the combination of a great orator and a great debater. Lord Balfour would never have claimed for himself that he was a great orator, but he was too intelligent not to know by the cheers he received daily from every member in the House of Commons that he towered above them all in debate.

Mr. Churchill is neither too fluent nor too verbose, nor what Sir Charles Bowen said to me and Jowett of a promising speaker at Balliol, "I find him somewhat

copious in narrative ;” but he is so concentrated on what he has prepared and intends to communicate to his audience that interruptions—often foolish and irrelevant—distract the current of his thoughts, and “current” is what above all gifts he has got whether in his splendid writing, brilliant conversation, or fine speeches. Less oratorically sensitive than Mr. Lloyd George, he is not captivated by his audience, nor does he receive much at any time from his listeners. His words come smoking hot from his mind to his lips and I sometimes think the power of his eloquence would carry on the pageantry of his conceptions even if the entire audience were to disappear.

The march of events, whether or not the events are of the political importance he attributes to them, would still *march* ; but in his far-flung imagination Mr. Churchill has never realized that the bands and banners of opposing marchers should prompt moderation instead of machine-guns. I would never rely upon his judgment in the handling of dangerous industrial upheavals or his co-operation in furthering the aspirations of the different races that we govern. Liberty, as Mr. Churchill sees it, should be more of a flourish than a fact ; and often as he has changed his allegiance he remains what he has always been, a dyed-in-the-wool Conservative.

He would have had a greater political following in the country had he timed himself to events with more astuteness. But he has made too many wrong entries, and though there is no theatrical manager in the world that would not welcome him, his fellow actors—though well aware that he always gets across the footlights and delights the play-goers—are never quite sure that his attendance will be regular ; and when the play is over they feel that it has been a great show, but wonder whether it will have a sufficiently long run to be remunerative.

It would be difficult to say in what capacity Mr. Winston Churchill’s genius would be best employed.

He has domestic qualities of a high order and I, among many, will always be grateful to him for his fidelity in friendship, exuberance of spirit, unflagging industry, and magnificent writing. But in spite of his many friends he has few followers.

Were I Mr. Lloyd George and Mr. Winston Churchill I would give up ordinary every-day politics in the same way as a much greater speaker than either of them—Lord Hugh Cecil—has done. They have many resources, the one engaged in writing his own life, and the other in writing the life of the great Duke of Marlborough, and they need only attend the House of Commons when they feel that they can contribute by their oratory to the common good.

Neither of them has retained the confidence of the country. The average British voter likes something less of charm and more of consistency, and unless present conditions change in a manner that no one can foresee I do not think either of them will ever lead any Party to victory at the polls.

Men like to know where they stand and who they are to follow. The gallant Duke of York (who had ten thousand men) said: "Forward my men and I will follow!"—but no man can either follow or be pushed if he is not certain of the goal to which he is being pushed. Do any of us know to-day what course or direction either Mr. Lloyd George or Mr. Winston Churchill want their political followers to pursue?

* * * * *

By the time this book is published everything I write may be falsified.¹ The more distinguished politicians in the present House of Parliament—Mr. Snowden, the reigning Prime Minister,² Lord Grey, and Mr. Baldwin—

¹ Most of what I have written upon politics and politicians was written months before the crisis of autumn, 1931; but I am not altering a word that I wrote then.

² Mr. Ramsay MacDonald.

will be old men, and the younger ones who are convinced that they are the Disraelis of the future may have found out their mistake. But for the moment, I see no group, such as the Fourth Party, or individual, that threatens to become formidable.

To return to the contention that the grand style has disappeared, I could mention several living speakers who contradict this theory ; but will content myself with two : Lord Hugh Cecil and Lord Buckmaster. These are men who can rise to heights of oratory unsurpassed by any of the speakers that I have heard or written about. Neither of them has any affectation, and in spite of both being moved by burning, and very different convictions, they never indulge in elaborate or histrionic phrases.

I could give innumerable quotations from Lord Hugh Cecil's speeches nearly all of which I have been privileged to hear, but will only quote one. He was speaking on the Education Bill in the House of Commons in 1902. He was alluding to the school of thought "who may be described as adopting the position of Christianity in everything but its theology ; who possess the morality of Christianity, its sense of right and wrong, its delicate sensitiveness of conscience, though they are unable to accept its theological basis."

He went on :

"These men, it may be said, erect in the mansions of their hearts a splendid throne-room, in which they place objects revered and beautiful. There are laid the sceptre of righteousness and the swords of justice and mercy. There is the purple robe that speaks of the unity of love and power, and there is the throne that teaches the supreme moral governance of the world. And that room is decorated by all that is most beautiful in art or literature. It is gemmed by all the jewels of imagination and knowledge. Yet that noble chamber, with all its beauty, its glorious regalia, its solitary throne, is still an empty room."



Lord Oxford

Of Lord Buckmaster, I can truly say I never heard more remarkable speeches than those he delivered when he came to Paisley to help my husband's candidature. But I can only quote from one, because our thoughtful Press was too full of the triumphs of the trio at Versailles, and the adulation for the man "who won the War," to report speeches delivered at a by-election: also the circumstances were so peculiar, that unless people are conversant with them, I do not know how his speeches might read to-day.

When we went to Paisley in February, 1920, we had to fight a popular Labour man and a Tory; and as Paisley had always returned a Liberal, the local organization had become slack and becalmed, and the younger electors were fervent believers in Mr. Lloyd George. The man who wins a war is always a popular hero, and my nerve had been shattered by the electors of East Fife rejecting a Member¹ who had represented them for thirty years in the House of Commons. The 1918 General Election (from which Liberals have never recovered) broke the heart and purse of every Liberal organization in the country, and some of the most respected Paisley Liberals said they would rather vote for a Tory than meet or shake hands with me, or any member of my family.

In all our early Paisley meetings, I could see that nothing but my husband's inflexible determination and grave oratory could dispel the suspicions that were lurking at the back of the minds of his hearers; and when Lord Buckmaster volunteered to come and make a final appeal to the Paisley electors I felt full of apprehension lest he should find something non-conducting in the audience which he would have to address.

Our meetings had started coldly, but my husband had become so popular that crowds of men and women stood for hours in the rain outside the halls to get seats, or standing-room, to hear him.

¹ My husband.

The night that Lord Buckmaster was advertised to speak, the best halls in Paisley had been taken by our opponents, and the meeting was held in a sort of railway shed, with bad acoustics and miserable accommodation. Hardly two hundred people had seats, and more than a thousand were standing ; added to which, the rain was clattering down upon the roof.

In spite of a short speech—listened to in enthusiastic silence—from my husband, most of the audience who had been standing were exhausted, and when he sat down, I observed a good many of them at the back of the hall scattering towards the exits. Some of the younger fellows were shouting cat-calls, and others enjoying tartan frolics while throwing their caps at one another.

When Lord Buckmaster got up, it looked to me as if nothing could stop the racket, and that the meeting was over. Some of the audience who could not get to the exits jostled forward from curiosity, and in a few moments every man in the hall was pressed close to his neighbour, and stood in hushed silence to listen to him.

He spoke without a note ; and in a ringing voice ended his speech with these words :

“ On the banks of one of your most beautiful Scotch rivers there stands a little town known as Craigellachie, and its motto, handed down from generation to generation is ‘ Stand fast Craigellachie.’ You will not find these words carved over the door of a Town Hall or marked on any memorial. They are written in the hearts of the people, and are symbolized by a rock which stands sheer and gaunt upon the river’s bank. Men from this town formed part of one of the Scottish regiments which, in the days of the Indian Mutiny, was the only defence which stood between British women and the cruel fury of a maddened people. Out-numbered and out-worn, the gaps in their ranks grew wide, the thin line wavered, bent, and seemed about to break, when down the ragged remnant of the regiment a hoarse whisper passed from man to man—‘ Stand fast Craigellachie, stand

fast !' I cannot tell all that was worked by the magic of these words, but strange visions are vouchsafed when the curtains are drawn back from the great pavilions of life and death, and it may be that in the din and smoke of the battlefield there came to these men a vision of the rough heaths, the shaggy woods, and the sweet waters of their native land, and in the front, the rock which, from their childhood's days had been to them the sign of courage undefeated, and faith undefiled. I know not how it was, but this I know, that the gaps closed up, the line grew tight, and the dark tide of their enemies rolled backwards in confusion and defeat, and never again would face the Scottish kilts. And so I say to you to-night, Stand fast, stand fast for the cause which has given liberty and justice to the people, stand fast for the man who, through times good, and times evil, has stood fast for you ; the man who never knew falsehood or fear, and whose name will be proudly recorded in the history of our country, when we are resting quietly in its forgotten graves."

Words read in cold blood give but a poor impression of the effect they produce, but my husband—who was deeply moved—told me that he had never seen a meeting that had threatened to become disorderly more completely mastered.

While I am on the subject of Lord Buckmaster, I think he is one of the few successful lawyers known to me that has not a fundamentally commonplace mind, and his speeches are inspired by a very rare nature. Some will say that he is too sentimental, and it is a criticism that possibly might be made of him. In his passion to defend human nature from the consequences of its fears, follies, angers and beliefs, he gets keyed up occasionally out of proportion to the significance of the cause he is defending ; but it is just this moral indignation—added to scholarship, and knowledge of human nature—that makes him the orator he is. He has matchless courage ; is neither moved by censure nor by praise, and has an

undefeated faith in the greatness of the legal profession.

He delivered an address before the Bar Association in 1925, at Detroit—a part of the world that has less respect for the law than any civilized nation in the world. In this address he told a story of the great French lawyer, Malesherbes, which is worth quoting.¹

“Malesherbes was given to good works, and beloved throughout the length and breadth of France. He was the most vigorous indicter of the abuses of the time, and after twice being called to the Councils of the State had to abandon the seals of office. He declared himself in favour of religious liberty, of impartial taxation, and of the abolition of *Lettres de Cachet* ; and had his opinion been listened to, the terrors of the Revolution might have been averted ; but he was disregarded, and the storm burst. He was in safety in Switzerland when his master, Louis XVI, was brought up for trial. The old man was then seventy-four. Others refused the office of appearing for the King, and pleaded, this one his age, and that one some other excuse. He said :

“ ‘ I was called to the councils of my master when all the world thought it an honour to serve him, and shall I not serve him now when all the world deems it a danger ? ’

“ In defending the King, Malesherbes addressed the tribunal with dignity and grace, calling Louis XVI by the old courtly title that had always been used in the proud days of Versailles. At last his treatment of the case got on the nerves of the tribunal, and the President said to him :

“ ‘ From whence, sir, do you derive authority to call Louis Capet by the name that we have abolished ? ’ The old man looked them in the face and said :

“ ‘ From whence ?—From my contempt for you, and for my own life.’

¹ I quote from Lord Buckmaster’s address, “ The Romance of the Law,” with abbreviations.

"The end was foreseen, and Malesherbes followed the King to the scaffold."

I quote this story, as in a similar situation Lord Buckmaster would have done the same.

* * * * *

I have travelled some distance from 1880, and my first experience of a public meeting, and shall now return to the Midlothian campaign.

After our early introduction to Mr. Gladstone's youthful Chairman, Lord Rosebery often came to stay at Glen. He was well read in the history of the Border Country, admired Glen, praised my father's pictures and china, and was not insensible to the glowing admiration we all felt for him.¹ There was no after-dinner game that he did not play with us, and I can see him now in my mind's eye draping himself with the carriage rug to act in "Beauty and the Beast," a small play which we improvised together to amuse the family.

It was only after I had paid several visits to Dalmeny and the Durdans, that I could find anything to criticize in Lord Rosebery.

His enjoyment at making butts of his family and his guests²—an enjoyment not always shared by the latter—made me uncomfortable, and though personally I always found Lord Rosebery a fascinating, stimulating, and flattering companion, I observed that oftener than not, other people found him an embarrassing one. It was not only his brilliant chaff, and ready rapier-play, but

¹ My father revelled in Lord Rosebery's society; and, after Mr. Gladstone, said that he was the greatest politician since the days of Pitt. Apropos of this, Lord Rosebery said to me: "I am always sure that I have done something really foolish when I get telegrams from your father and [Lord] Wemyss congratulating me upon a political speech."

² Arthur Balfour shared my dislike for this form of raillery and on page 73 of his Autobiography he writes:

"We may be sure that outside the House of Commons Mr. Gladstone never made a butt of any man."

in certain humours he appeared purposely to make his hearers ill at ease, and I do not think anyone increases his own stature by making other people look small.

Lord Rosebery was quite unconscious of this, and when I pointed it out to him he thought I was talking nonsense as none of his children ever minded his chaff. He said it was good for young people; and what he enjoyed at Glen was seeing us all so intimate and familiar with each other—he had never seen a happier family circle—and could I say we did not chaff one another? I asked him about his early years, and he told me of his devotion to his sister Constance (the Dowager Lady Leconfield).

Many years later I got to know Lady Leconfield and a cleverer, more perfect character I have never met. Her sense of humour, width of outlook, generosity, and absolute sincerity I have found unequalled in my experience. She can change people without words.

I never knew how much Lord Rosebery believed in the power of the Press, but as he was intensely sensitive I think he alternated between curiosity and contempt.

After his resignation, my husband and I were staying at Dalmeny, and one evening Lord Rosebery asked me if I would drive with him—as was his wont—at midnight. I was delighted to comply with his request, as in these lovely drives on the banks of the Forth he and I had had many memorable conversations. It was a cold night, and I ran upstairs to slip off my evening dress and put on a tweed skirt and heavy overcoat. Being a quick dresser I went to his private sitting-room, where I had always waited for him, and got there before he arrived. I looked at the curious picture of the trial of Charles the First, and was reminded of a story which John Morley told me.

Morley: "The other night at dinner I sat between Birrell and a pretty young woman dressed in what, I suppose, you would call muslin. I'm ashamed to say I was so interested and entertained by Birrell's conversa-

tion, that it was some time before I turned to my youthful neighbour. I asked her if she was fond of reading, to which she replied that she adored nothing as much as books. 'Have you read anything lately that has interested you?' I said; she said that she was absorbed in a life of Charles the First, and asked me if I had read it. It was a blameless book written by an obscure author, but I had dipped into it, and told her I thought that the chapter upon the King's execution was conscientiously written. At which she put her hands up to her ears, and said, '*Oh! don't tell me!—don't tell me!!*' "

After looking at the picture, I observed several newspapers marked with red and blue pinned and spread out upon a table, but before I had time to examine the passages marked, Lord Rosebery came into the room. He seemed upset at finding me in his sitting-room, and asked why I was there; I said that I did not know where else to wait for him, as the lights in the drawing-room had been put out. We walked in silence together to the front door, and after Lord Rosebery had put on a Glengarry bonnet, and thrown a heavy Napoleonic cloak round his shoulders we got into an open carriage which he told me was called a "Drouet." It was drawn by two high-stepping horses with a mounted postillion, and a solitary servant sat with folded arms erect upon a seat behind us. I looked at the white bustle of the postillion bobbing up and down in the faint light of a round moon as we turned out of the Park on to the grass drive which runs level with the banks of the Forth.

It was a glorious night illumined by the "large few stars," and the flat silver of the river, the watery moon and quiet rhythm of the horses' feet filled me with emotion. I felt an overwhelming affection and compassion for my companion. What was there that the man beside me could not have achieved in life? . . . Why had he resigned? . . . With his charm, oratory, intellect, and versatility, what was it that he lacked to outstrip all his political competitors . . . and yet I felt my husband

was right when he said to me upon our arrival at Dalmeny: "Rosebery will not come again."

I was anxious not to talk about politics, and hoped the beauty of the stars and river might divert his attention; but in all the drives and walks I had with Lord Rosebery I never heard him make a comment upon Nature. Our conversation opened cautiously, but I knew by the way he half listened, and then interrupted, that what he most wanted to discuss was the political situation.

After a pause in our easy but rambling conversation, Lord Rosebery asked me in a casual manner how I thought public affairs were going, and if Lansdowne was doing well in the House of Lords. I told him that as I seldom went to debates in the House of Lords I was not a good judge of their deliberations; and added that there was little of importance going on except what the newspapers were writing. At this he said he had the greatest contempt for the Press, and never looked at a newspaper. Remembering the papers that I had seen spread out and marked with red and blue while waiting for him in his sitting-room, I regretted this remark and turned the conversation on to Glen, my family, and the Forth Bridge.

Arthur Balfour told me that after the failure he had encountered with his Education Bill—for which every newspaper denounced him—he had received, to his surprise, a sympathetic letter from Lord Rosebery advising him to ignore all Press abuse, as in his experience it counted for nothing. As Arthur Balfour at that time seldom opened a newspaper, he was amazed that Lord Rosebery should suppose he was in any way affected by what the Press was writing of him.

Neither praise nor abuse matter very much to certain sorts of people, and Lord Balfour was not only detached by nature, but was trained by his uncle; and I can truly say that I never met a man who cared less for what was said, or written about him, than the late Lord

POLITICS AND THE PRESS

Salisbury. On page 119 of Lord Balfour's "Chapters of Autobiography" there is a characteristic letter which he wrote upon receiving a draft of Arthur Balfour's "Burials Bill."

20, ARLINGTON STREET,
March 19, 1878.

MY DEAR ARTHUR,—

A very good Bill—if men's minds were in a temper to take good Bills. I used, in my hot youth, to spend time in devising similarly perfect schemes for the settlement of the Church Rate controversy. Hubbard and I used steadily to introduce Bills which steadily came to nothing. May yours have a more auspicious ending—But if you bring it in, you will probably find yourselves well protected from the curse which attaches to those of whom all men speak well.—

Ever yrs. affecly.—SALISBURY.

* * * * *

Looking back to-day, I think Lord Rosebery succeeded too easily, and too young, to a position of unrivalled public eminence to fulfil the political promise of such sudden notoriety. His personal prestige was so imposing that in his presence everyone shared a common desire to please and to flatter him, and, with the exception of my husband and Lord Randolph Churchill, I never heard anyone who had the temerity to stand up to him. "Don't look at me with your poached-egg eye, my dear Rosebery," Lord Randolph said, "as it will not intimidate *me*." At which Lord Rosebery gave Lord Randolph one of his rare and lovely smiles. I think he was at his best on the few occasions that I met him with Lord Randolph Churchill, or when he was talking to my husband.

Lord Rosebery was born with a delicate streak of feminine self-consciousness, and his insomnia—from which he was a life-long sufferer—added to it. No one who has not suffered from this nerve-racking complaint can have any idea of its effect, and his courage in combating it won my ceaseless admiration. Sleeplessness was a topic that he and I often discussed, and he once

asked me if it was true that I could read a book that interested me when I went to bed till early in the morning. I told him that I could not do it after a long day spent on the moors, or following hounds, but that though my yawns prevented me from dozing, the interest that developed in the book that I was reading removed all my desire to sleep. On one occasion I remember him being angry with me for saying that sitting up several nights running nursing some ill person was the only certain—though temporary—cure that I knew for insomnia. I said it with no *arrière pensée*, but he thought it was a reflection upon his self-centredness.

Dr. Johnson remarks : “ There is in human nature a general inclination to make people stare ” : and I think this was applicable to Lord Rosebery. He liked doing the unexpected. It is possible that had Lord Rosebery been exposed to the buffets and reverses that await public men who court constituencies, his career might have been different. His Eton tutor, William Cory,¹ said : “ He wants the palm without the dust ” : and in the course of a conversation I had with Lord Newton last autumn, he said : “ No one was better company than Rosebery ; but he was a political *prima donna*, who expected bouquets to be thrown at him from every part of the theatre.” And they often *were* ; as he was among the greatest occasional speakers of my lifetime. But quite unconsciously, he imitated himself, and tricks of phrase and of gesture became noticeable in his speeches as he grew older. His outstanding and highly cultivated gift of oratory tempted him to dramatize himself, and mistake the foot-lights for a more enduring illumination ; and upon set occasions there was a high-sounding and booming note in his voice which seemed like the pulling out of an organ stop, and did not ring true.

The danger of dramatizing yourself, is, that when the audience ceases to be affected by the drama, the principal actor is left very much alone : and though Lord Rosebery

¹ William Johnson, the author of “ *Ionica*.”

when a young man had passionate public admirers, and as an old one devoted personal friends, he remained throughout his life a lonely and disappointed man.

It is not for me to write anything about his great achievements in literature, racing, or the County Council, as Lord Crewe is writing his official biography, and I know no one who—from his inner knowledge and literary distinction—is more capable for the task. It is enough for me to say that looking back over many long years, Lord Rosebery's prestige, fascination, and personality will always be engraved upon the memory of all of us who knew him.

* * * * *

Before the Midlothian campaign my only experience of London had been when my parents took Lord Brougham's house in Berkeley Square for my sister Chartie Ribblesdale's wedding in 1877. They thought it was the best way of getting acquainted with the Lister family, and their future son-in-law. We had no governess, but a Polish lady came daily for a few hours to take us to the Degville dancing classes, and watch our progress in the French language under the direction of Monsieur Roche.

Everybody was too busy fussing over bridesmaids' dresses, wedding presents, the church, the cake, and the invitations, to take much notice of the children. Laura, Lucy, and I, thought the best way of amusing ourselves would be to take our stilts to London and walk on them in the Square. I sometimes wonder that we were allowed to do this, as walking on high stilts in Berkeley Square attracted attention, and all sorts of little urchins collected round the railings to watch, and boo at us.

The first time that the Dowager Lady Ribblesdale—a lady of high breeding, great beauty, and narrow outlook—came to inspect the Tennant family was an occasion that filled my modest mother with trepidation ; but we were too gay and young to share her alarm, and for us,

one "grown-up" was much the same as another. I was devoted to Ribblesdale, knew nothing of his family, and had not been warned of the Dowager's impending visit.

My sister Chartie was engaged in trying on her wedding dress, and Lady Ribblesdale was sitting in Lord Brougham's beautiful drawing-room talking to my mother. She was discussing her son, his bride, their honeymoon, and their future, when I walked in through the open doorway upon my stilts. Dipping my head to avoid colliding with the chandelier I slipped on the polished parquet, and fell full length at the Dowager's feet. This unlucky introduction shocked and embarrassed both Listers and Tennants, and to our infinite sorrow the stilts were removed.

It was obvious that London was no place for Border-bred children; and it was not till the year 1881—when my father bought Lord Gerrard's house in Grosvenor Square—that we ever lived there.

I have written fully of our doings in London in my Autobiography.

* * * * *

After the Midlothian campaign we became acquainted with more people of the world, and most of the leading Liberal Ministers came to stay with us. I formed a great friendship with Lord Spencer who paid his first visit to Glen accompanied by Lord Granville.

With the exception of the Duke of Westminster,¹ Lord Lansdowne, Lord Pembroke,² the old Duke of Beaufort, and the present Lord Londonderry, Lord Granville and Lord Spencer had the finest manners of any men that I have ever known.

Lord Granville (privately known as "Pussy") was astute, courtly, and attentive, and under a disarming exterior could persuade anyone to do whatever he

¹ The present Duke of Westminster's grandfather.

² George, Earl of Pembroke.

wished. If you read his correspondence with Queen Victoria you will have a perfect insight into his even temper, tranquil tact, unfailing humour and unerring diplomacy.

Lord Spencer was more prejudiced, insular, and simple. His lack of conventionality can only be compared with Lord Hartington's,¹ and though very different in temperament the two men had much in common. Born of great families, fortunes, and estates, and without any particular ambition, they were inspired by a rare sense of public duty which without giving them much pleasure always held them in a close grip.

I did not know Lord Spencer when he was Viceroy of Ireland, but after his visit to Glen I stayed for several weeks to hunt with him at Althorp; and some of my most thrilling riding adventures were when following the Pytchley hounds over the big fences and vast enclosures of the finest hunting country in the world.

Lord Spencer was adored by all the neighbours, farmers, and owners of covers in Northamptonshire, and was an unrivalled Master of Foxhounds. His lean lanky figure, loose reins, red beard, keenness and courtesy, made him a notable figure in any company, and though arrogant and authoritative, I never saw him lose his temper with the field.

Althorp was the first grand country house that I ever stayed in, and when I was invited to take my horses to hunt with Lord Spencer, I was filled with the wildest excitement.

I do not think that there is any country house in England to-day that has so fine a library, or so many beautiful and valuable possessions as were to be found at Althorp at the time I went there. Full-length portraits by Gainsborough, Romney, and Sir Joshua Reynolds, and landscapes of the English school hung round the gallery of the great staircase, and vast pictures of horses, painted by Stubbs, were fixed into the white

¹ The late Duke of Devonshire.

panels on either side of the imposing front entrance. Nor was it only books and pictures that made the place famous, there was no one of any distinction that did not stay at Althorp, Princes, Prime Ministers, Professors, Ambassadors, Archbishops, women of fashion, and hunting and racing men all met to enjoy the lavish hospitality extended to them by Lord and Lady Spencer.

When I arrived, the only other guests that were staying in the house were Maria, Lady Ailesbury,¹ and Mr. Spencer Lyttelton,² both old and characteristic specimens of a fine and forgotten generation.

Lady Ailesbury—better known as “Lady A.”—was a shrewd, handsome old lady who had seen and known the most distinguished men in England, and delighted in the society of all young people. Mr. Lyttelton—or “Uncle Spencer” as he was called—was an uncle of my brother-in-law Alfred, and a great character. Had he had the intellect of Dr. Johnson he might have attracted a second Boswell, as upon every occasion he blurted out what came uppermost in his mind, had an excellent sense of humour, never repeated any of his good sayings, and feared nobody.

Upon the first night of my visit, I sat between “Uncle Spencer” and my host at dinner, and Lady Ailesbury was placed on the other side of Lord Spencer. As everything was conducted upon the most magnificent scale at Althorp I had no reason to suppose that my host was suffering from a desire to economize, and it was only later that I observed Lord Spencer’s irritation when coal was heaped upon the fires, and matches were struck and wasted by some of his clumsy guests.

I was told afterwards that Lord Spencer had lost some of his vast fortune, and I imagine that men who have had something like £70,000 a year and find they have less, are privileged to consider themselves

¹ Maria—Dowager Marchioness of Ailesbury—of whom I drew a caricature on page 32 of the first volume of my Autobiography.

² The brother of Alfred Lyttelton’s father.

poor ; but it is a privilege with which ordinary people will not sympathize.

When the butler came round at dinner that night with the wine, he said to my neighbour :

“ Sherry or claret, sir ? ”

To which “ Uncle Spencer ” replied in a loud voice :

“ Neither, damn it !—*I want champagne !* ”

Although we all heard this remark, it was received in Arctic silence. I looked apprehensively at Lady Ailesbury who gave me a slow, smiling, and solemn wink.

When we left the dinner-table, Lord Spencer took a ginger biscuit off a dish of them which were put next to his plate at every meal, and as old Lady Ailesbury walked majestically through the door of the dining-room that he was holding open, he placed the biscuit surreptitiously upon the top of her yellow, and immense chignon. As she held herself as stiffly as if she had swallowed the fire-irons, the ginger biscuit remained poised upon her hair while she sat in the drawing-room ; but as the quiet evening wore on, and her head began to nod, it fell into her lap. Starting up, she said to me :

“ Miss Tennant, I observe you lolling on the sofa : this is not at all an elegant attitude for any young woman ” ; and turning to Lord Spencer, she added : “ I hope, Spencer, that you found *The Times* for which you were looking.”

Lord Spencer replied that *The Times* was nowhere to be found, at which she said with a circulating smile :

“ As long as you play tricks on my chignon with ginger biscuits I shall sit upon your *Times* ” ; and getting up with a sweeping gesture she showed him *The Times* folded on the chair under her voluminous petticoats.

These, and other little jokes, continued off and on throughout my first visit to Althorp.

One morning when the frost prevented hounds from leaving the kennels, Lord Spencer and I went for a walk

to the stables. In the course of conversation he asked me what I thought of his butler.

"He has only been with me for a year," he said, "but though he has the right manners, height, and appearance, I fear that he has no sense of humour, as I never observe a smile on his countenance however entertaining the conversation may be while he is waiting on us at meals. Do you not think you could say something, Miss Tennant, that might possibly provoke him to laughter. If you *could*, it would be gratifying to me."

I said that I would tell him a vulgar story at dinner which might meet with the success which he desired.

Our two guests had departed, and that night Lord and Lady Spencer and I were alone. In the middle of dinner I asked my host if I could tell him a story. Having received his permission, I said :

"The old Duke of —— observed his butler one night at the sideboard cleaning a salad plate with his pocket-handkerchief. Outraged by this, the Duke said :

" 'What *are* you doing, Ransom ! ' to which the butler replied :

" ' I thank your Grace, but it is only a dirty one. ' "

Lord Spencer was delighted when he observed his butler wreathed in smiles, and though Lady Spencer was a little shocked, she put her hand over her mouth to conceal her amusement.

Lady Spencer—who had been one of Queen Alexandra's bridesmaids—was reticent, gracious and shy : she loved dogs, parrots, and an unruffled life, and did not care for any kind of game or sport. Modest, beautiful, and of exquisite refinement, she never got out of bed till lunch-time but would sit up talking till any hour at night.

Upon my second visit to Althorp she asked me to talk to her in her bedroom.

Lord Spencer and I had had a memorable day's hunting with the Pytchley. I had ridden Molly Bawn—a mare given to me by Gratty Blaggrave after I broke off my engagement to him—and had distinguished my-

self by jumping two high hand-gates on and off a narrow bridge leading over a flooded brook, and Lord Spencer had been close to his hounds throughout the run.

There were no motors in those days, and we had jogged home at hounds' pace for miles in the dusk with the huntsman (Will Goodall), the whips, and the hounds. When passing an old Italian wheeling a barrow of oranges, Lord Spencer pulled up, and asked the four of us if we would care to join him in eating an orange ; after which he bought five oranges which we sucked in silence while the stars came out.

I was delighted to be asked by Lady Spencer to go to her bedroom at ten o'clock after dinner that night, but I felt dumb with fatigue.

She entertained me by talking about the years she had spent in the Viceregal Lodge in Dublin, and told me that when the Prince and Princess of Wales¹ had been their guests in Ireland, an enthusiastic Home Ruler had thrown a coffin into their private railway carriage.

After a little more conversation, she said :

"Now you must go to bed ; but before you go, dear Margot, I have a confession to make to you. When Spencer told me you were bringing your horses to hunt ~~here~~, I said I regretted his invitation and hoped your visit would not be long. You must remember, dear, I had never met you and, if you will forgive my saying it, some of my friends told me you were fast." She sighed, and took my hand : "I am sorry now for what I said, and hope you will come here as often as you like : you know that Spencer and I are fond of you. Will you forgive me ?"

Putting my arms round her neck I kissed her on both cheeks and left the room. I lay awake for a long time pondering over what she had said.

Lord Spencer and I became close friends, and he often joined me in the early mornings when I was riding in Rotten Row.

¹ King Edward and Queen Alexandra.

MORE MEMORIES

He had as little cant and nonsense about him as the late Duke of Devonshire, and told me that before the split in the Liberal Party over Home Rule, Hartington¹ was the Cabinet colleague for whom he had the greatest personal affection. He added :

"I regret to say we never meet now, and I do not think he would care to see me."

I told him that I was certain from what I knew of the Duke that if he would go to Devonshire House his old colleague would greet him with delight.

Lord Spencer : "Very well, if you really think so, I will go. Neither he nor I is touchy, but I strongly disapprove of the Liberal Unionists. Liberal or Tory if you like !—but why this third party ? It is neither fish, flesh, fowl, nor good red herring—Hartington is a Liberal, and he'll do himself no good by deserting his Chief, joining Joe, and pretending to be a Tory."

I was not surprised when Lord Spencer told me that Lord Hartington had been his favourite colleague, as he was a man of scrupulous truth and infinite charm, who by his directness, lack of self-consciousness, and abrupt address, put everybody in good humour and at their ease. Both he and Lord Spencer were sportsmen of the best English type, and while the tastes of one led him to the gaming-tables, Newmarket and Cremorne, the other kept foxhounds, bred shire horses, and never touched a card.

Riding with the Duke of Devonshire a few days after this conversation, I told him what an affection Lord Spencer felt for him. He looked at me, grunted, and said :

"Everyone likes foxy Jack : tell him to come and see me."

A week later Lord Spencer went at an early hour to

¹The late Duke of Devonshire was always called Hartington. After the Tranby Croft baccarat incident I asked the Duke what he would do if he saw anyone cheating at cards in his house : "Back him !"—was his reply.

Devonshire House and asked if the Duke was at home. The servant replied that his Grace was alone in his study.

Lord Spencer followed close upon the footman's heels to the Duke's study. When the door was opened, and left ajar, the servant said :

"If you please your Grace, Lord Spencer would like to see you."

Not knowing that Lord Spencer was immediately behind the footman the Duke gave a long, loud whistle of surprise, at which Lord Spencer turned round, and walked down the marble staircase. When Lord Spencer told me what had occurred I exclaimed :

"How *could* you do such a thing !—and you, who told me you were *not* touchy !"

"My dear Margot, I felt sure that it was kindness that prompted you to bring us together, but when I heard his long, loud whistle, I had no reason to suppose he wanted to see me."

After this incident reconciliation was impossible, and neither in Spencer House nor Devonshire House did they ever meet.

In spite of Lord Spencer's pride in his famous Althorp library I never saw him open a book. The only time books were mentioned he said to me in a deprecating voice that he had no time to read.

"What with the stables, the kennels, and politics, how can I read—! but I enjoyed that book '*Jane Eyre*'—you know . . . by George Eliot."

I said I quite understood, and that reading, like other things, was a habit which should be acquired in youth. I recommended him when he had time to read Boswell's life of Johnson ; I was sure it would amuse him, as some of the great Doctor's remarks reminded me of his own.

In saying this, I was reminded of the gentleman who after introducing his brother to Dr. Johnson said :

"When we have sat together some time, sir, you'll find my brother grow very entertaining."

"Sir," said Johnson, "*I can wait.*"

CHAPTER IV

MR. GLADSTONE

I WARNED readers in the Preface of this book that as I was not writing my life, I intended to skip about from person to person and topic to topic, and it is probable that I shall exceed the limit of such licence, but I am now going to return to the man of the greatest fame, character, and eloquence, that I have ever known—Mr. Gladstone.

* * * * *

For the moment, the intriguing and romantic figure of Lord Beaconsfield is deservedly popular with the reading public. His relentless ambition, mysterious convictions, effrontery, patience, and wit, combine to make him an irresistible subject for every biographer. They picture to their readers an unknown young man of pale face and Jewish origin, dressed with studied fantasy, moving with elaborate gesture, and jumping up and sitting down before an open-mouthed and jeering House of Commons : a mixture of actor and dandy strangely repugnant to the ordinary Englishman. Their readers follow, with the same open mouth, their account of Dizzy's amazing development from the political adventurer, to the man who lay back on the Front Bench in deathly pallor, his eyes filmed like those of a crocodile under a bank, waiting till the moment came when he could expound to an enraptured House his policy of Empire. A man like this needs no biographer. He has left enough phrases, novels, and letters to make him immortal.¹ But at the

¹ In the Rendel papers there are, among many brilliant anecdotes, two of Disraeli which I will quote :

end of it all do any of us know what Disraeli really was—or what he believed in?

His political rival—Mr. Gladstone—has been unlucky in his biographers, and has been guilty of a little posthumous tactlessness by having kept, and written, so many letters. In spite of Lord Morley's fastidious intellect, literary gifts, and personal knowledge of his subject, he was too impenitent, pernickety, and vain to understand the hot mind, passionate beliefs, and complex elements in a nature as subtle, fearless, and aspiring as Mr. Gladstone's. You must possess something noble in your own nature to enable you to describe anyone of Mr. Gladstone's dimensions; and though some men catch a little of the greatness of the men they live with, John Morley¹—though a fascinating companion—was not a great man, and the life of Mr. Gladstone should never have been entrusted to him. His heavy volumes would bury his subject—were such a thing possible—if they were all that future generations would be able to read about him. You may search Hansard, trace legend, and record achievement, but above all you must make your hero live if you are to write of a man who was more alive than

Shortly after he became Lord Beaconsfield some young Peer asked Disraeli what course of study he had best take to qualify himself for speaking so as to gain the ear of the House of Lords. Disraeli replied:

"Have you a graveyard near your house?"

"Yes," was the reply.

"Then," said Disraeli, "I should recommend you to visit it early of a morning and practise upon the tombstones."

The other was when walking down St. James's Street one day he met Lady Sebright in her brougham. Lady Sebright congratulated him on his earldom, on which Dizzy with gracious gravity and a flourish of his hat, replied:

"Of what avail or value are dignities to me, so long as Sir John Sebright continues to exist?"

¹ To show how little John Morley understood Mr. Gladstone he once said of him that his mind was a busy mint of counterfeits. A clever saying—but had it been true, Mr. Gladstone would never have kept the confidence of this country, and the admiration of most of the nations of the world.

any man God ever made, and nothing that I have read about Mr. Gladstone is more than an ill-defined family picture badly hung.

The portrait by Millais, which my father bought from the Duke of Westminster and left in his will to the National Gallery, is much more like the Mr. Gladstone that I knew than anything that I have ever read about him.

“To retain after death the art of making friends” (said, I think, by Hazlitt) depends not a little upon your biographer, and the temper of Mr. Gladstone’s mind, and curious grandeur of his personality, were so different from those of other men, that it is possible that no one but another Boswell could have done justice to his memory.

I can only write of him simply, and as I knew him.

When my sister Laura married his nephew—Alfred Lyttelton—our two families became intimate, and I missed no opportunity of seeing as much as I could of Mr. Gladstone.

Herbert—the late Lord Gladstone—was my brother Eddy Glenconner’s greatest friend, and he and his wife never failed in their political loyalty and private devotion to my husband. At that time I knew the other brother less well, but Harry—the present Lord Gladstone—has got all his brother’s generosity and courage. Much as I loved Mr. and Mrs. Gladstone and their two sons I never cared for their daughter, Mary Drew. She was a clever woman of many tastes and a devoted wife and mother. She was also one of the best of talkers, but there was something in her nature that did not harmonize with mine. This may be a condemnation of myself—as she had many warm friends and her brothers, sisters, and all her family were devoted to her—but at the time of my marriage she expressed her disapproval with such vigour, both to my face and to my friends, that she hurt me. She may have been right in thinking I was not worthy of the devotion of the man I married, but when in your inner heart you are sharing something

of the same opinion you need the support, and not the censure, of those whom you have looked upon as friends.

Although I had stayed at Hawarden, it was not till November, 1890, that Mr. Gladstone paid his first visit to Glen.

It is not my purpose in this book to repeat anything that I have already written ; but I will give a short account of Mr. Gladstone's visit taken from my diary of the day, and notes made by Helen Gordon Duff (my brother Jack's ¹ first wife) which have never been published.

We were in a state of the greatest excitement and all went to the station to meet him and his old servant—Zadoc. Innerleithen station was packed with enthusiastic mill-girls, manufacturers, and male and female supporters, and it was some time before we could get Mr. Gladstone comfortably settled into the family barouche.

Sitting at the tea-table, he talked with animation. He said that the Tory Government was like a bad farmer who did not renew his lease or restock his farm, but let his term run on till the land became lean and exhausted. He went on to tell us that he had just finished reading Froude's life of Disraeli,² and entranced us by his accounts of the great political duels that they had fought when opposed to one another in the House of Commons.

Mr. Gladstone : " The first time I ever saw Disraeli was at a breakfast-party where he wore those extraordinary and elaborate clothes of which he was so fond, but which he had to subdue when he got into the House of Commons. Froude has treated his subject from a merely external point of view ; in this he is wise, as no

¹ The Right Hon. H. J. Tennant.

² I found among old papers a criticism that I wrote of this book, which I read after Mr. Gladstone's visit to Glen : " In Disraeli's desire to preserve his notoriety, he cultivated a mocking manner till it became part of himself, and he was convinced that any other way of conveying his personality to the public would not add to his stature."

living man ever knew what was in Disraeli's mind, or understood the foundation of his character. He was the most remarkable man that ever sat in the House of Commons : I do not say the *greatest*, but the most baffling, and extraordinary. You must not forget that he wrote his first, and best novel—' Vivian Grey '—when he was a solicitor's clerk at the early age of twenty, and though there is some trash and much that is tawdry in all his books, there is wit, perception, and many admirable phrases in them. The motto of ' Vivian Grey ' is characteristic of the man. ' Why, then, the world's mine oyster which with my sword I'll open.' In ' Contarini Fleming ' he makes Contarini say : ' He would find life intolerable unless he was in an eminent position, and was conscious that he deserved it. Fame, and not *posthumous* fame, was necessary to his felicity.' This," exclaimed Mr. Gladstone, "was the author himself speaking."

I said that Disraeli's love of chandeliers, dukes, drawing-rooms, and display, might lead one to suppose he had been a snob, unless—as was probable—he was writing with his tongue in his cheek. Mr. Gladstone thought that possibly dukes did attract Dizzy, but added :

" He did not have the same feeling for them as our friend Mr. Chamberlain, whose former animosity to dukes has become considerably mitigated since he has grown nearer to their society." ¹

After this enthralling conversation, to which we had listened in silence, Mr. Gladstone retired to his bedroom.

When we had finished dinner, the arm-chairs in the red drawing-room were clustered round our distinguished guest. My sister Chartie,² who sat next to him, quoted Arthur Balfour as having said he thought that statesmen's wives were daily becoming more commonplace.

¹ This showed a lack of perception, as no one cared less for titles than Joseph Chamberlain.

² Lady Ribblesdale.

Mr. Gladstone : " Less eccentric, you mean."

Chartie : " Perhaps he meant that."

Mr. Gladstone : " But I cannot allow that there is no term between eccentricity and commonplace. Shakespeare was not eccentric, yet you would not call him commonplace."

He admitted that Mrs. Disraeli and Mrs. Lowe, " had in them a large element of unintentional burlesque." Turning to my mother, he pleased her by saying that the soup at dinner should have been kept entirely for invalids.

Mr. Gladstone stayed at Glen for four days, touring round the country villages and county towns in the family barouche accompanied by my father, and some of us. He spoke to everyone he met with ardour and courtesy, and addresses were read, and flowers given, wherever we went.

We had made up our minds from the first day of his arrival that we would not expose Mr. Gladstone to the fatigue of conversing with bores at meals : but the day before his departure, my father invited two Scottish Members of Parliament to luncheon.

The common opinion, which I had often heard expressed, that Mr. Gladstone could not bear to read a word against himself—and was guarded by his family from any possibility of doing so—is as erroneous as the idea that he could swallow any amount of flattery, for upon the occasion of our lunch, the two Scottish Members of Parliament vied with one another in the most extravagant adulation, to the noticeable irritation of their hero.

In the middle of an absorbing story that Mr. Gladstone was recounting, the younger one of them said :

" I knew that man, sir, and all your comments upon him are well-deserved."

Mr. Gladstone turned a slow, but dangerous eye upon him, and said :

" You claim for yourself a melancholy privilege, sir,

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as if you knew that man, you must be at least as old as I am."

* * * * *

This early and simple account of Mr. Gladstone's conversation gives an inadequate idea of what he was like. It has only one value, it was written at the time, and it would need a more experienced pen than mine to give a true impression of Mr. Gladstone's personality.¹

What interested me most in Mr. Gladstone, was his strange mixture of subtlety and simplicity, his rare sense of duty, amazing lack of pettiness, and his curious and original sense of humour.² Nothing that he has written, or that I have read about him, will ever convey these characteristics. His sense of humour was like a precious stone that has never been cut—a rough diamond, but never an imitation rough diamond—(affected by some of the Americans that I know). He was burningly interested in all that *he* was saying, and all that was said to *him*, and anyone who could tell him anything—whether a villager, a parson, or a peer—was of equal moment. As a criticism, it might be said of him that he was so absorbed by what his own mind was forging, that he hardly distinguished those who were worth listening to, from those who were *not*. But when he was

¹ While I was writing the above sentence, I received a letter from my oldest friend, Frances, Lady Horner. It was an answer to one of mine in which I told her that I was not well, and in the deepest dejection because I would be obliged to sell The Wharf, and in consequence, was suffering from a mild kind of illness for which there was no cure. I will not quote all she wrote in her healing answer; but only one sentence, because it is more applicable to Mr. Gladstone than to me or any other being: "I've often envied your gifts; to be able to express one's personality as you do, is a wonderful thing to have achieved in life."

² Dr. Johnson says: "The size of a man's understanding may always be justly measured by his mirth"; Mr. Gladstone was not always in the humour to be amused, and as I dislike sudden guffaws—as of a sense of humour taken by surprise—I was glad that he seldom laughed.

talking to conscious conversationalists upon serious subjects, he made their interventions sound very thin, and with few exceptions I regretted all their interruptions.

A sense of humour is the God-given decoration of existence, and if not too pert and hard, should have enough pathos in it to divert you from the inevitability of some of life's sorrows. But it is often mocking and shallow, and does not always add to the greatness of men. Wordsworth had no sense of humour, and speaking for myself I find my smiles rather wintry when I am listening to Shakespeare's fun. Mr. Gladstone said that if Shakespeare's plays had not been written for the British public—a public that usually laughs at the wrong thing—we would have known more about his sense of humour, but that he himself had never been entertained by it.

There are so many facets to a sense of humour, and the various things that provoke our smiles or our laughter, that it is hazardous to express an opinion on it.

We share a secret laughter with Cervantes, a boisterous laughter with Dickens, a pure laughter with Lear,¹ a sober laughter with Lamb, a continuous laughter with Sidney Smith, a jolly laughter with Wodehouse, reckless laughter over "The Young Visitors," laborious laughter over Shakespeare, something different from laughter over Swift, Sterne, and Voltaire; and Chesterton, Calverley, Belloc, Birrell, Max Beerbohm and Bernard Shaw are perpetual feasts of delight. But in no way comparing Mr. Gladstone's sense of humour with these, I delighted in his grim and unpremeditated flashes, and in certain moods there was a kind of observant drollery in his asides which never failed to amuse me. What he said to my husband sitting beside him on the Front Bench of the House of Commons—a few moments before he was to make one of his great speeches on Home Rule—is characteristic of his acute and unexpected observation.

¹ When my sister married Alfred Lyttelton she confided to me in an awed whisper that none of the Lytteltons could smile at Lear.

Mr. Gladstone (turning to his Home Secretary): "Who, my dear Asquith, do you consider the plainest man in this House?"

Surprised at a moment when he supposed that all the Prime Minister's thoughts were concentrated upon his speech, my husband replied without hesitation:

"Sir Richard Temple."

At which Mr. Gladstone said:

"You are quite wrong. If you magnify Sir Richard Temple's face, the greater it becomes; but, if you magnify the face of that little man" (pointing to Mr. A——) "the meaner it becomes."

Lord Balfour writes in his "Chapters of Autobiography" (pp. 72-73):

It was said of him (Mr. Gladstone), I think with truth, that he had little wit. It was said, I think without truth, that he had little humour.¹ It may be admitted that he did not always appreciate the humour of other people, and it may be said that to some audiences (and those not the most despicable) his own humour sometimes failed to make an appeal. Yet it is absurd to say that he had none. You may search Hansard for it in vain. But pray remember that Mr. Gladstone, as a Parliamentary artist, should, least of all men, be judged by the arid accuracy of a verbatim report. So treated, the rarest qualities of the spoken word may evaporate in a night, and of all such qualities humour is perhaps the most volatile.

Lord Balfour goes on to say:

He had qualities which would have made him a good talker with half his learning and a tenth of his experience; for he was natural, tactful, and, if need be, eloquent, totally without pretension and totally without spite. The listener who would not be content with merits like these must be hard to please.

¹ What he writes in his account of the Sicilian mule is a good sample of his humour.

"I had been on the back of the beast for many scores of hours, it had done me no wrong; it had rendered me much valuable service, but it was in vain to argue: there was the fact staring me in the face: I could not get up the smallest shred of feeling for the brute, I could neither love nor like it. . . . What that Sicilian mule was to me, I have been to the Queen."

Talking to me one day when I lunched with him alone in Carlton Gardens, some years ago, Arthur Balfour described the amazing power with which Mr. Gladstone could pulverize his opponents in the House of Commons at any given moment. He would not hear of Disraeli's superiority, and said that Gladstone exercised an individual influence in this country greater than any of his Parliamentary predecessors with the exception of William Pitt.

In this connexion I see that on page 129 of his book Lord Balfour narrates that "a bad speaker is said to have been asked how he got on as a Candidate." "Oh," he answered, "when I do not know what to say, I say 'Mr. Gladstone,' and then they are sure to cheer, and I have time to think."

I have written in my Autobiography of a conversation I had walking in the Hawarden woods when I asked Mr. Gladstone what he would reply if someone were to ask him on his death-bed what he thought had made him famous, so I will not repeat it. But though I think it *untrue* to say he had no self-knowledge, I think he was never at all familiar with himself.

Some of us have a fancy, and some of us a mistrust of ourselves; some are puzzled, some lenient, some misled, and others severe; but the majority of mankind have little or no *Self* to examine.

To have personality you must be interested in yourself, and the greater the puzzle the more you should try—by occasional stocktaking—to unravel it. You can never know what other people are like unless you know yourself, and the study of man is of more use in this world than the study of anything else. I have known amazingly clever men and women who spend years of thought upon themselves but at the end of it have no self-knowledge: they cannot bear a breath of criticism, and live in blinkers. I have known equally clever men and women fatally handicapped all through life by a profound mistrust of themselves. What self-conscious-

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ness is in life, stammering is in speech. It cannot be cured by self-confidence, as this is never attractive, but only by an untiring interest in the joys, successes, foibles, and failures of other people. If the self-conscious preferred themselves, this would be a counsel of perfection, but it is because they do *not*, that I proffer this advice. The shy and self-conscious are often humble to a fault, but they do not surrender their "Self," and it looms too large in the horizon of their lives.

(I am not indifferent, but I have very few illusions about myself, and no subterfuge or plausibility can prevent me from knowing precisely what I am; but as later on in this book I am writing something about myself I will not dilate upon it here.)

Mr. Gladstone was of all men the least afflicted by smallness of nature, and I have never known a private friend or public man who—in spite of strong dislikes—had so little pettiness in his composition. He not only enlarged the boundaries of politics, but of everything he touched, and I shall be surprised if when his papers come to be published they will not reveal a searching mind.

On the occasion to which I refer, of our walk in the Hawarden woods, I could see he did not wish to pursue the discussion about himself, so I told him a story that Lady Horner had told me of an experience she had had in Scotland when she was staying at Oban. She went into a baker's shop to buy a bun and after a little conversation the baker said to her :

"Are you English or Scotch?"

She replied that she was Scotch; to which he said :

"May I ask where you learned your English?"

She replied : "I learnt it in England."

Listening reflectively to her answer, he said :

"There will be a great many of my countrymen in England . . . but . . . I'll tell you of aye place in Scotland where there are a great many English."

Intrigued by this remark, Lady Horner asked him to what place he was alluding.

"Bannockburn," was his reply.

In one of our conversations, Mr. Gladstone told me that at a dinner-party in London he had made a social slip which had created a certain amount of embarrassment. He was dining with our neighbour in Grosvenor Square—Mr. Colman—who had made a fortune in mustard. He was an ardent Liberal, and on the occasion of this dinner, Mr. Colman and his wife had collected their sons, daughters, and all their relations to meet Mr. Gladstone. The pause before dinner was so long, that Mr. Gladstone said he could hardly contain his impatience. At last he turned to his hostess, and said :

"Are we all mustered?"

After which the flurried family went hastily into the dining-room.

We went on to discuss British statesmen, and I asked him if he had ever known his political rivals. He said that in his early days political opponents seldom met, but that though he knew Disraeli a little, he had never really appreciated him. It had been repeated to him on competent authority that Disraeli—in spite of his abuse of him—had never felt the same antagonism for him as he (Mr. Gladstone) felt for Disraeli. He added that he could not speak too highly of Disraeli's courage, patience, and insight ; and resented the attempt on the part of Lord Randolph Churchill to claim the same distinction.

Knowing that before the advent of Home Rule, Arthur Balfour had often stayed at Hawarden, I was anxious to hear Mr. Gladstone's opinion of him. To my surprise he said :

"I loved him more than any young politician, but he is insolent to me now."

I was so much moved by this remark, that when I left Hawarden I wrote to Arthur Balfour. As I was sending him a book, written by our mutual friend Sir Alfred Lyall, for a Christmas present I made this an

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excuse for writing a full description of my visit to Hawarden. This is his reply : ¹

Xmas Eve.
1889.

CHIEF SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
DUBLIN CASTLE.

MY DEAR MISS MARGOT,

The book arrived the day after your letter—and I have shown my appreciation of it in the most practical way by at once devouring it. Like everything that I know of Lyall's it is most excellent reading—do you know his "Asiatic Studies"? However, it was not to talk about your present, but to thank you for it that I took up my pen :—you know what pleasure I have always derived from your friendship and what pleasure therefore I derive from any outward and visible sign of it.

I am very glad that you have been at Hawarden and liked it. I have spent so many pleasant days there that I should have been sorry if the place had found in you an unsympathetic critic. W. E. G.'s keen interest in his own subject is delightful—and even marvellous. No one need fear old age if they could retain half his eager curiosity in things important and (still more !) *unimportant*. It is curious to note that he who is popularly supposed to be the embodiment of "advanced" views is, even as regards politics, much more as regards science and certain aspects of theology (of which I know nothing) the least *modern* person I know. N. Rothschild ² has just faced his house at Tring with *old* red bricks to please the æsthetes. W. E. G. has been constructed on precisely the opposite plan. Old red bricks form the true substance of the building—to please the multitude there is a coating of stucco !

I am much interested in his attack on me for treating him in my speeches with "insolence." I see you concur to a certain extent in the charge, though in talking to *him* you valiantly attributed all my shortcomings to the provocation of the Irish !—I am afraid the defence will not hold water. The truth is that under the same provocation I have always behaved in the same way : though no doubt it is *only* since I have been a Cabinet Minister that *he* has had the fact forced upon his attention. The real reason is, can and ought personal criticism to be avoided ? And here let me distinguish. General abuse—miscellaneous scattering of violent adjectives—coarse vituperation à la Harcourt or à la T. P. O'Connor—ought

¹ I had permission to publish this letter from Lord Balfour himself the night I dined with him when he asked my husband to write his autobiography.

² The late Lord Rothschild.

never to be indulged in ; not because it injures the individual against whom it is directed (on the contrary it may make his political fortune as it has made mine) but because it lowers or tends to lower the not too high level of public life. Of such abuse I have often been the object ;—never to my knowledge the author. But now put yourself in the position of a speaker replying to a specific charge, made by a great leader, against his party or his subordinates : a charge involving perhaps their honesty of purpose, their truthfulness, their humanity. Suppose that it affects the character and the prospects of men who from their position cannot defend themselves ; but who are carrying on duties of extreme difficulty under circumstances which might try to the utmost the strongest nerves and the highest sense of public duty. Suppose further, that although directed in the first instance against individuals these charges represent merely a move in the political game which has for its end the destruction of much that is most valuable in our wealth of inherited institutions. Then, I ask, is the speaker who is exposing these calumnies word by word and line by line ; who shows by chapter and by verse that they are false and that the accuser should have known they were false ; who sees gifts of eloquence that were given to enlighten mankind unscrupulously used to mislead them ; is he not to be allowed to say what he thinks of such proceedings ? Is he to be obliged, in the interests of public manners to point his moral by expressing a “ reverence ” for his opponent which, in such a connexion would be either hypocritical or idiotic ? I never to my knowledge have used language which is not justifiable, true, and proper to be employed ; and which would not be admitted to be so by all those *who accept my view* of Mr. Gladstone’s conduct. *This* no doubt is not accepted by Mr. G. and his apologists :—but at all events it has been arrived at with all caution and impartiality :—the grounds of it have been in every case (I believe) stated, at least in outline : they have seldom been seriously disputed : and never so far as I know, upset. My whole case, in short, is this :—miscellaneous vituperation ought to be avoided : it is stupid, and useless, and hurtful. But the comment which is *squeezed out of you* (so to speak) by the character of the thing commented upon : which is the inevitable inference from all the facts and arguments you have been adducing, cannot be avoided, and if it can only be rendered in very plain language, then very plain language must be used. It is justifiable if it is true. It is not justifiable if it is *not* true :—and I should never think of objecting to any comment, however violent, on my own public conduct, if I thought the commentator had really arrived at his conclusion after making the best inquiry he could into the facts, and not merely with the vulgar object of degrading a political opponent.

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What a rigmarole !!! The upshot of it all is that I am very glad that you like the Old Man :—for my own part I *love* him, and if he be (and I think he is) the most unfair of Parliamentary speakers and the most unscrupulous of party managers, so I dare say would the most virtuous of mankind become if, with his peculiar mental and emotional endowments, they were subjected for fifty-five years to the blessed influences of a free government !—

Here I am till Parliament meets. I suppose you will be trying to break your neck somewhere in the Midlands, and will not reappear on the scene—*my* scene that is—till Easter instead of Xmas is on us.

All happiness to you in the meanwhile : and au revoir soon.

Yours ever,

A. J. B.

I had another conversation with Mr. Gladstone on a second visit to Hawarden which I will recount.

I asked him which of the many men he had known he had cared for most. He replied that the man for whom he had had the greatest veneration had been Hope Scott, but that when in the Oxford Movement he had joined the Church of Rome, their friendship had been dissolved, which had been a lasting sorrow to him.

He went on to discuss Manning, Newman, and other men of the Oxford Movement. We agreed that Purcell's life of Manning was a remarkable book, and had been an eye-opener into the less reputable side of the rivalries, intrigues, auctions and ambitions of the Roman Catholic Church. I asked him what his friend Lord Acton thought of the book. He informed me that Lord Acton was arriving that night at Hawarden, and was shocked when I said that I was sorry, because it not only interrupted our conversations but that I did not care much for Lord Acton. I had to confess that I did not know him well ; but that in spite of all his erudition, I thought he had a fundamentally commonplace mind and that given enough ladders, application, and book-shelves, you could find an Acton. In spite of my limited education, what I liked in men of learning was not what they knew, or remembered, but their inner reflections upon the books they had read ; and I did not think Lord Acton had any key to his mind. I added that apart from this, I

felt that he was lacking in originality, directness and humour.

Mr. Gladstone controverted with vigour my opinion of his friend, and advised me that whenever I had a preconceived prejudice against any person, it was "wiser to suspend judgment," and quoted some Frenchman who wrote, "You may be allowed preferences in life, but no exclusions."

I said that I hoped at dinner that night he would discuss Purcell's life of Manning, and get Lord Acton to pronounce his opinion upon it, as I felt convinced that he would evade the question, and say he had not read the book. Mr. Gladstone replied that he was only too willing to talk about a biography of such historical value, and which had been so universally admired and discussed.

That night at dinner, the conversation turned upon every subject but Purcell, and in vain I tried to deflect it from dentistry, geometry, and matters which were to me of little interest. Seeing my chance—in a pause over a discussion upon Maltese marriages—I asked Lord Acton if he had read Purcell's life of Manning.

He took no notice of my question, but Mr. Gladstone was reminded of our afternoon's talk, and turning to Lord Acton, said :

"What is your opinion of Purcell's life of Manning?"

To which Lord Acton replied that he had not read it.

Whether Mr. Gladstone believed this or not, I cannot say, but we never again alluded to the subject of Purcell, Acton, or Manning.

* * * * *

(In connexion with Manning Mr. Birrell told me that he could not help admiring him.

Birrell : "Manning was a wicked bloke, but he did a lot of good among the poor, and was much more popular with the Roman Catholics than Newman. Newman was never comfortable over the Virgin Mary, the Sacred Heart, and all that side of it. I'm not irrev-

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erent, as there's no more profound mistake than to mock at any man's religion, but Christ is nowhere in the Catholic Church compared to the Sacred Heart. Some of his new fellow Churchmen did not like Manning. As you know he was married, and when his wife died it was repeated to him that a priest who was anxious to become a Cardinal was always saying :

“ ‘ WHAT a pity poor Mrs. Manning died !—*what a pity ! !* ’

“ When Manning heard this, he said one day to him :

“ ‘ Is it true you are so sorry that my wife died ? ’

“ ‘ Well, ain't you ? ’ replied the priest.”

Alfred Lyttelton told me that when Cardinal Manning died, and his coffin was lying in state in the Oratory he joined the vast and reverent crowd that walked all night round the flowered bier. There were priests standing in various places to see that those who had already passed moved out of the Cathedral, and he observed one very poor old man walk round several times. At the third turn he was stopped, and told he must follow the others and leave the Cathedral, at which he turned round, and with streaming eyes waved to the coffin and said :

“ Good-bye, bloody old Kipper, good-bye ! ”)

* * * * *

Mr. Gladstone was born with great natural advantages : an arresting face, perfect courtesy, and unsurpassed vitality. His oratory was not only enhanced by his northern accent, but by his beautiful voice ; and I doubt if anyone reading his speeches can have any idea of the effect that they produced. He had none of the polish of Melbourne, the aloofness of Salisbury, the wit of Disraeli, or the cynicism, glitter and elegance of the speeches that are readable to-day. But there was something in his fine appearance, tiger smile, and unconscious ascendancy that inspired his supporters and awed his adversaries.

What will puzzle future historians who write upon Mr. Gladstone is the mixture of complexity, subtlety, and simplicity of his mind. There are some men who are like material that is cut upon the cross. It is not because they are not straight, but because their minds are so supple and restless that they *pull*, and come into conflict with their motives ; it was something sudden and not slow that shaped Mr. Gladstone's actions. The foundation of his mind was a belief in liberty—not only for people in these islands but for the whole civilized world. His amazing foresight made a superficial observer think that his political changes were opportunism, but fundamentally he was always the same man, with the same convictions ; he never changed. Most men can only see what they think to be the pattern of a man's mind, and look upon it as they might upon a carpet. A carpet has a pattern, but it can be looked at from any angle : complex natures must be studied from within, and though Mr. Gladstone's elevated purpose and moral conscience were easy to perceive, I think the passion, resource, and subtlety of his mind and motives will always remain a matter of controversy.

I never knew how deep Mr. Gladstone's feelings were, as though a man of temper, he was a man of great self-control, and when I knew him he was old, and looked upon me as an adventurous young woman whose aliveness, affection, and interest in all that he said gave him pleasure.

In any case as we have been given incommunicable lives it is hazardous to express an opinion on the depth of one another's feelings. But with the exception of my husband, I have never observed a sign of *disinterested* emotion on the part of any of the ten Prime Ministers ¹ that I have known.

¹ I think I am wrong, for as Mr. Spender pointed out to me, Gladstone's passion for Liberty and nationality showed disinterested emotion ; but it was intellectual and not personal, and it is personal emotion that I am writing of.

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We can all love ourselves and our kith and kin ; but it is the loose love and compassion for the human race that distinguishes one man from another. Bacon says : " The nobler a soul the more objects of compassion it hath " ; and lack of this compassion I must confess is not confined to Prime Ministers. We must have sensitive and receptive hearts if love is to take possession of them, and unless one is watchful and selfless, life is apt to put the heart out of action. I have lived long enough in the world to find cleverness on every bramble-bush, but the quality of love or charity (without which all knowledge, all faith, and the tongues of men and of angels are as nothing) that makes men live in the hearts and minds of their fellow-creatures, I have seldom met.

* * * * *

What Mr. Gladstone possessed above and beyond any one that I have ever known was courage. When I was young, I thought this such a common quality that to meet someone without it, was as if you met a leper ; but I have long since changed my opinion. Courage is as hard to find in human beings as compassion, and there was never a time in our Parliamentary history when there was so little political courage as there is to-day.

Talking to Mr. Snowden¹—a man of immovable courage—a few months ago upon this subject he told me a story of John Stuart Mill.

Mill was the Member for Westminster, and in one of his speeches he declared that most of the working men he had met were idle and untruthful. His supporters were outraged by this remark, and after pointing out that such a sweeping assertion would do him infinite damage when it came to the General Election implored him to withdraw it. This he declined to do. His constituency consisted entirely of poor people and working men, but notwithstanding his impenitence John Stuart

¹ Now Viscount Snowden.

Mill was returned to the House of Commons by a largely increased majority.

Mr. Gladstone's conversion to Home Rule—supposed by his opponents to be an act of pure opportunism—was an act of amazing courage, and so far from winning votes, kept the Liberal Party out of office—except for a brief interval—for thirty years.

It was courage and character that made Mr. Gladstone not only a political giant, but a dominating influence all over Europe, and I will end this chapter by quoting what Hazlitt writes upon fame.

“Fame is not popularity, the shout of the multitude . . . it is the spirit of man surviving himself in the minds and thoughts of other men, undying and imperishable.”

This might have been written of Mr. Gladstone ; and for me, he will always remain the most alive and arresting public figure of my lifetime.

CHAPTER V

A VISIT TO THE EAST: OSCAR WILDE: LORD MILNER

ALTHOUGH I had finished my education when I spent six months alone in Dresden at the age of seventeen, I had travelled little, and the first journey of interest that I made was in 1891 when my mother expressed a wish to go to Egypt. There were two reasons at the back of her mind when she made this proposal. She thought my father was too engrossed in making money in the City, and that I was too engrossed in hunting in Leicestershire ; and of the two, I think anxiety for my future was paramount. She said she loved Glen, knew Paris, disliked London, and wanted to see the East. She saw no prospect for my future in the hunting world, and thought a complete change of scene for me would be wise. My mother had much quiet sagacity, and though she liked my sporting friends, she did not think I would be happy if I settled to live among them. The intellectual outlook of the hunting world, as it is of all lives given up to one pursuit—cricket, golf, tennis, etc.—is circumscribed, and their views upon public events are summary, conservative and inelastic. Like Mr. Winston Churchill's views upon India they believe in machine guns ; and " Shoot 'em down " was a solution I often heard expressed when industrial disputes were exercising the Government. If you do not want to marry, there is no life as carefree, healthy, and happy, as life in the hunting field, and I have never regretted a moment of the time I spent on it. My dearest woman

friend was Con Manners,¹ and she, her husband—"Hoppy"—and I, lived at Cold Overton, Oakham, twenty-five glorious winters together. Minor Lawson² and I have remained devoted personal friends, and there are others with whom I shared many triumphant cross-country adventures. But for nine years I had been in love with Peter Flower, whose amazing horsemanship, courage, and compelling charm were in complete harmony with the out-of-door side of my nature and had it not been that the other side was the stronger I might have made an honest man of him by an unsatisfying marriage. My mother, who was incurably romantic over love-affairs, had the wisdom not to interfere, but said to me some years later, "You can't imagine with what relief I welcomed Mr. Asquith in your life as I felt sure he would save you by his advice from marrying a hunting man." Peter was much older than I was, and it made me unhappy to see how little he cared for books and politics, and how ill at ease he was with the people of intellect that I lived with from the moment the hunting season was over.

Thanks to a new friendship I had formed with the man I afterwards married, Peter and I had parted, and as he had joined an expedition "to peg out claims" in Mashonaland, Leicestershire had not the same lure for me, and I was profoundly unhappy. I told my mother I would go to India, Egypt, China, Japan, or wherever she wished. My father disliked travelling as much as I did, but he was so afraid that I might end by marrying a horse-coper that after a little persuasion from my mother, he acquiesced in her desire to see the East, and after engaging an Italian courier—called Correlli—we left London for Cairo in November, 1891. 'Arthur Balfour was among the friends who saw us off at Victoria Station and he asked my father how he was feeling : to which he replied :

"As well as a man can feel who is going to be hanged."

¹ The late Lady Manners. ² Colonel the Hon. William Lawson.

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I kept a careful Diary of this journey and after showing it to a few friends upon my return from Egypt I was persuaded to have it privately printed, and it is from this journal¹ that I publish the following account.

* * * * *

"1891. We arrived at Rheims on the evening of the 13th of November and went to see the Cathedral directly after coffee the next morning. It is finer outside than any Cathedral I ever saw except perhaps Lincoln. For boldness, imagination, and detail, I can hardly fancy anything more beautiful.

"There was a mumbling funeral service taking place, and the High Altar was hidden by black merino, and most of the decoration of the Cathedral was swathed in black. The stained-glass windows flashed like gems upon my eyes. Mama and I knelt down and said our prayers, but Papa walked about looking at the tinsel Virgins, and many poor pictures of Christ—protesting against the way that they were hung.

"In the afternoon we went to see Mr. Bauer, a civil German who took great trouble to show us the whole process of champagne making. After this, we went to his office where he insisted on making us taste two bottles of exceptionally dry and fine champagne. He told us the two last good years for champagne had been in 1880 and 1887. . . .

"We spent a night at Lucerne and arrived at Milan on the 16th. I would have finished the second volume of General Marbot's Memoirs had it not been for the scenery. . . . It was a relief on getting to the other side of the St. Gothard tunnel to find the landscape buried in fog. Mama was able to continue reading her book on Egyptology, and I could go on with Austerlitz. Papa was reading some sort of work on general information, and told me that the second book

¹ Excepting for abbreviations, I have not altered a word of this journal.

that Caxton printed was a rhymed treatise upon hunting. This moved my thoughts to Peter Flower, Mashona-land, and my horses in Leicestershire. . . .

"Milan Cathedral though rather fine outside is a flat-catcher with a false roof. I was reminded of Heine's preface to the 'Reisebilder' in which he says: 'This is an unfinished work; like the Milan Cathedral, the Prussian Constitution, and the God of Schelling.' . . .

"After arriving at Rome (on the 18th November) I wrote to Rennell Rodd, Lord Dufferin, and Harry Cust and they came round to the Hotel and took us to St. Peter's.

"I can imagine people who expected a worshipful mysterious Cathedral being disappointed with St. Peter's; our London St. Paul's has more reverence, charm, and quiet. St. Peter's is too large to love, and too bright to see, and my architecture is not Roman, but with all its faults I cannot help admiring it.

"The High Altar is the ugliest specimen of tortured taste that I ever saw, and there are several Gunter sugar figures of white Apostles which are ludicrous. Far the most beautiful thing in the Cathedral is Michelangelo's Virgin holding the dead Christ.

"The Sistine Chapel—and Michelangelo's ceiling—is a feast of beauty, but so difficult to see that my eyes and neck ached after looking at it.

"I think Rome is a sad town. . . . At every corner you see shadows of faded splendour, and hear faint reiterated echoes of laughter at the fate that befalls national vanity, and the frailty of man: a little child stumbles through the broken pavement in the flower market, and you feel the greatness of God.

"I went to see Lord Dufferin.¹ We had a long talk, and he advised me to marry.

¹ Lord Dufferin and I had made a lasting friendship before my visit to Rome. His knowledge of literature, and the world, distinguished manners, and subtle sense of humour made him an enchanting companion, and I have kept every letter he ever wrote to me.

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“ ‘ You must never marry *because*, but in *spite* of being in love,’ he said ; ‘ you are far too clever my dear Margot not to be helping some man.’ ”

“ We dined with Colonel Slade and his wife, and I sat next to Dr. Axel Munthe whose ‘ Letters from a Mourning City ’ (translated by Maud Valerie White) had impressed me. We got on well ; I skipped the preface—as I always do with strangers—and as he is an intellectual flirt of the highest order we made friends. Being a moderate sightseer, when my parents were trapesing round the wonders of Rome, I received several visits from Dr. Munthe. He is an artist in conversation, perception, and companionship. He said that I had flown across his path like a brilliant little bird that comes quite close and then flies away, and he wished that he had met me before I had become spoilt. I assured him that though he might not believe it, such as I *was*, I had *always* been ; I was born what he regretted I was ; and my mother had often said :

“ ‘ The worst of Margot is that she will never improve.’ ”

“ He said that my brain worked at lightning speed ; and—observing a smile of scepticism in my eyes—he said he was not in any way flattering me. When he drove me to the station for our journey the next day to Naples he held and kissed both my hands, and gave me yellow roses.

“ Harry Cust and Rennell Rodd were staying at the same Hotel as we were in Naples. I was woken up at an early hour by the sound of waves blown violently up upon the quay, and went out in my dressing-gown on the balcony of the hotel. I nodded to a lot of jabbering flower boys in the street below holding up large bouquets of red and pink roses for me to buy. . . .

“ Harry Cust and Rennell Rodd took us to the Museum.

“ I do not think any place in the world can have so many beautiful bronzes as there are in the Museum at Naples. Criticism is silenced when you are in front of such arresting beauty ; and I wonder why people can

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tolerate so much that is ugly in painting, architecture, and sculpture, after they have travelled in Italy.

"Want of taste is a perpetual surprise to me, and were it not so common, it would almost influence my opinions upon people. Clumsiness, untidiness, and want of grace make me cold with impatience. Papa tries me highly when we have meals in the train. He drops his pears and his rolls on his clothes and on the floor, and I am grateful—when we protest—that he is always good-humoured. . . .

"In the afternoon we went in the train to Pompeii.

"We were lucky to have as our companions Harry Cust and Rennell Rodd as they told us everything, took us everywhere, and we wandered over the flagged streets in sheets of rain and gazed at the green and gold, wreaths and bows, that decorated the deserted rooms—I was deeply moved by the haunting pathos of Pompeii. There was a rose tree in full bloom clinging to a Corinthian column. I picked a piece of maidenhair fern from under it to send to Evan Charteris—as in my last letter to him I thought I had been rather petulant."

* * * * *

To leave my Journal for a moment I would like to say something about Harry Cust. With the exception of my stepson—Raymond Asquith—Harry Cust was the most brilliant young man that I have ever known. He had a more unusual mind than George Curzon, and a finer sense of humour than George Wyndham ; and if he had not had a fatal fascination for every woman that he met, might have gone far in life.¹ But he was self-indulgent, and in spite of a charming nature and perfect temper, he had not got a strong character. He was an unsuccessful Member of Parliament as he was a nervous, ragged speaker ; but he edited the *Pall Mall Gazette* (owned by

¹ Napoleon wrote of his brother Lucien : " C'est de tous mes frères celui qui a le plus de talent, mais il a toujours eu un travers pour les femmes."

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the late Lord Astor) with considerable success. He might have been a good writer ; but with the exception of Mr. Winston Churchill,¹ I have always seen journalism fatal to all literary achievement.

Harry Cust wrote several poems, one of which is published in the "Oxford Book of English Verse"—a rare compliment to any living author.

Harry Cust knew nothing about common people and detested Democracy. He had a passionate admiration for Arthur Balfour, and I sometimes think if he had been a Liberal, and my husband had been his Chief, he would have done more to stand by Cust when his self-indulgence got him into the trouble that ended his political career. He was a brilliant and suggestive talker ; more faithful in friendship than in love, and by his intellect and gaiety, was a stimulus in the circle called "the Souls." I met him in London in 1885, and perhaps if I had been older, and understood more of the temptations that beset men of Harry's nature, I could have helped him. But it is easier to influence strong than weak characters in life, and in spite of his brain, his charm, and his lovely wife, some fundamental infirmity of purpose prevented Harry Cust from fulfilling his early promise.

* * * * *

To return to my Journal.

"We had an endless journey to Brindisi with eight people packed closely into our compartment. . . . Thanks to Papa (who preferred Cook to our courier) we waited for hours at Brindisi to reclaim our luggage,

¹ Neither journalism, nor anything could have spoiled Mr. Churchill's literary genius ; he is the greatest political historian that we have had since Macaulay, and it is regrettable that he should waste a moment of his time on politics, as his lack of conviction will always prevent him from being either a good leader or a good follower. I may be wrong, but I think that Lord Milner, Lord Birkenhead, and other men that I have known, might have written books of distinction had they contributed nothing to the newspapers.

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and as there were two ships, chaos and confusion raged between the Cairo and Australian passengers to Alexandria. Oaths in every language, and a jumble of French, Italian, American and English voices deafened us.

"We walked up the slanting plank on to the P. & O. ship *Bokhara*, and I was greeted by the familiar smell of smuts and oil. We were booked to start at 4 a.m.—but before that, porters, people, baggage, and boxes, were dragged over the thin ceiling above our heads accompanied by feet, shouts, and screams till I felt that I was in hell. By the time the ship left the harbour, the sun was flooding the sky and illuminating my cabin, so that sleep was out of the question, and the sound of plates smashing, doors banging, and all the preparations for breakfast made me curse travelling.

"The next morning there was hardly a breath of wind, and I forgathered with a charming Captain Martyr who was in the Egyptian army. Papa played quoits, and smoked an enormous cigar, but as I am always ill on a ship I left Captain Martyr, went down to my cabin, and talked to the stewardess. . . .

"We arrived at Alexandria on 26th (November, 1891), a horrible place full of jabberers, conjurors, dragomans, flymen, pilots, policemen, women like mummies, children like rag dolls, Egyptians, screams, and perspiration. . . . Dusty earth, faded cabbages, dromedaries, goats, buffaloes, starved cows, skeleton horses, disconsolate dogs, and men and women squatting and smoking filled every corner in the streets of Alexandria. I took up the *Egyptian Gazette* and read of the death of Lord Lytton. As I was devoted to him, it gave me a great shock; and I wrote to his rare and beloved daughter Betty.¹

"Upon our arrival in Cairo on 27th November (1891) my eyes were blinded by fatigue. I found letters in our Hotel from Mr. Asquith, Evan Charteris, and Mr. Milner—who is 'en poste' here with Sir Evelyn Baring.²

¹ Lady Betty Balfour.

² The late Earl of Cromer.

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"We had a fascinating drive to our hotel through the by-ways, and big streets of Cairo. Groups of idle, graceful, slovenly Arabs lay lolling, or standing, with lithe limbs and dirty garments gathered round their arms and legs in a hundred folds of coloured beauty. Long, sloping, shuffling camels with tragic faces slipped silently past with men on their backs carrying babies and bundles ; and white donkeys of enormous size with their heads tied up and tasselled harness stood for hire at all the street corners. Boys shouted their names at me : 'Mrs. Langtry,' 'Minnehaha,' etc. Mr. Milner called at our Hotel and took us to see one of the great Cairo mosques.

"Alfred Milner has gravity and charm, and I delight in talking to him. He knows too much, I fear, ever to enjoy talking to one of my education, but though a little self-conscious and formal, he has no intellectual arrogance.

"At the mosque were beggars sitting with their heads upon their knees, women with their faces turned to the wall, and a row of Turkish slippers greeted us. Squatting negroes tied the slippers over our shoes before we were allowed to penetrate into the mosque.

"The interior was open to the roof, and a round stone pond was covered with a baldaquin where worshippers sat round washing their feet and their stomachs. There was no altar, but a pulpit for the preacher was raised on a square stand where a man mumbled the Koran for hours at a time. Men on strips of matting knelt with their foreheads on the floor turned towards the east, and the brown soles of their naked feet were turned towards us.

"The next day Mr. Milner introduced us to Cairo society at the races. I was much struck by Sir Evelyn Baring, who is I think called the Pro-Consul here. He has every English virtue ; great character, natural authority, and a directness of purpose which must be bewildering to Orientals. I was told that no Egyptian ever goes to see him without taking a companion.

"One night Mr. Milner drove us in an open carriage

to the native bazaars where there was a feast being celebrated : 'The Feast of Hassan and Hussain.' The whole population of Cairo was in the streets ; every shop, booth, and stage was illuminated, and all the houses joined together by small red and white square flags. The crowd surged against our carriage working themselves up to a high pitch of excitement, swaying, singing, and beating bronze gongs. The women danced in a revolting way of shaking stomachs and quivering bosoms, their evil eyes painted till they glowed like snakes, and their heavy skirts caught up to show swollen and hideous legs. The sharp sudden scream of a lunatic with wide open mouth and arms stretched high above his head, dashed against our carriage, and Mr. Milner thought it was time for us to return to the hotel. I did not want to do this, but Papa and Mama preferred it, so after dropping them, Mr. Milner and I went off together and walked down dark and deserted alleys to look at Persian carpets.

"It was early in the morning before we returned to the hotel after a memorable conversation.

"I saw Alfred Milner every day before we went in a Cook's steamer called *Rameses* up the Nile.

"He is different from any of my friends, and has not lived in contact with the worlds that I have known—golfing, hunting, Mayfair worlds—he is stiffer in mind than Arthur Balfour, less attractive than Evan Charteris, and much less compelling than Mr. Asquith, and I am not sure that he is a good judge of people ; but there is something modest, lonely, and fine in him, and I am convinced that our friendship will last."

* * * * *

I will leave my diary here, with its account of our expedition up the Nile as journeys are almost as tedious to read about, as to make, and, prompted by a note in the margin of my journal : "On 7th December (1891) I received a letter from Oscar Wilde saying he had

dedicated his new story 'The Star Child' to me" will write about a friendship I had formed with the author.

The first time I ever saw Oscar Wilde was in May, 1888, at a garden-party given by Lady Archibald Campbell, the mother of the present Duke of Argyll and a woman of great charm and originality. I observed a large, fat, floppy man, in unusual clothes sitting under a fir tree surrounded by admirers. He was explaining why he thought he resembled Shakespeare; and ended a brilliant monologue by saying he intended to have a bronze medallion struck of his own profile and Shakespeare's. At which Lady Archie Campbell said in a slow voice: "And I suppose Mr. Wilde *your* profile will protrude *beyond* Shakespeare's!"

I had no idea who he was, but joined in the conversation; and after tea, he and I strolled together round the garden. Having heard me called "Margot," he asked what my other name was, and I said: "Margot Tennant." I asked him what his name was, and when he said "Oscar Wilde," I told him that I had only once heard the name of Wild, and it had been the Christian name of a woman. A highfalutin friend of Godfrey Webb's called Mrs. Rose, had christened her first baby "Wild," but as the child was either called "baby," or "Wild," her lovely idea of hearing it called "Wild Rose" had not come off. She ultimately married a Mr. Bull; and I ended the story by saying "a rose by any other name would smell as sweet."

He promised to come and see me when we said good-bye, and I invited him to stay at Glen.

Oscar Wilde and I saw one another often after this first meeting: I think he found the lack of paradox in my conversation restful, and when alone together, he was certain of two listeners. He came to Glen in the autumn of 1889, but as he disliked the country he spent most of his time in the house, and wrote several aphorisms and poems on loose sheets of paper. I regret to say I

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lost these, and the only poem of his that I possess is one which he wrote in my album.

IMPRESSIONS¹

The Thames—a nocturne of blue and gold
Turned to a harmony in grey :
A barge with ochre-coloured hay
Dropped from the wharf : and chill and cold

The yellow fog came creeping down
The bridges, till the houses' walls
Seem changed to shadows : and St. Paul's
Loomed like a bubble o'er the town.

Then suddenly across the clang of waking
Worlds the streets were stirred
With country waggons, and a bird
Flew the glistening roofs and sang !—

And one pale woman all alone
(The daylight kissing her wan hair)
Loitered beneath the gas-lamps flare
With lips of flame and heart of stone.

It may be because knowing him as well as I did, the artificiality of his nature was so alien to my own, that I have never been able to separate the man from his books, but Oscar Wilde is not an author that I appreciate, and speaking for myself, I do not think his stories, plays, or poems, will live. I am probably wrong, as his plays are applauded in foreign capitals. *The Importance of being Earnest* is brilliantly clever, and it is always foolish to prophesy upon the future fame of any author ; but I doubt if cleverness is enough to ensure it. What made him famous was the effect he produced by his curious personality and witty, daring conversation ; but though I have not read anything written about him I doubt if the biographer exists who can reproduce these.

To me, he appeared like something monstrous and unreal thrown into a world of human beings ready to applaud, but not to accept any of his views upon life.

¹ This is a variation of "Impressions du Matin" published in Wilde's collected poems.

Of his prose writings, the last—and some people think the best—was written in prison. “De Profundis” was, I imagine, the outcome of his sufferings, and is his Apologia. It is the only one of his books that I have re-read, and has the defects which I think I would find were I to re-read his poems or any of his works of fiction. It is thin of thought, and though the words soar sometimes like birds in wind, they never soar very high, and there is not a phrase in “De Profundis” that you could quote. It also shows the taint of a religion in which he did not believe, and to which he only turned hysterically after his troubles. When he was convicted, Oscar Wilde was treated with such cruelty and inhumanity that it is possible that physical and mental anguish impaired his powers of reflection. But there is nothing in this book that recalls what Keats says of Wordsworth : “He thought deep into the human heart” ; or what Mr. Read says of the same poet : “Wordsworth’s poetry . . . belongs to that rare species of poetry in which *thought is felt.*”

In “De Profundis,” Wilde clings to Christ as a drunkard clings to a lamp-post. He dwells with reiterated insistence—and rightly—upon Christ’s mercy and His sympathy ; but what Oscar Wilde never discerned, was the humanness and purity of life which gave Jesus the sovereignty of sympathy. It was not His ethics, or His intellect, but Christ’s *humanity* that differentiated Him from the other prophets of the world.

On page 30 of “De Profundis” Oscar Wilde writes : “Neither religion, morality, nor reason, can help me at all. Morality does not help me. I am a born antinomian, I am one of those who are made for exceptions, not for Laws.” *

It is always dangerous when a man claims to be an “exception,” for if he *is*, he should be unaware of it ; and I think that Oscar Wilde prided himself throughout his life on being “an exception.”

He admires Renan’s life of Christ in which Renan

describes his Hero as—" *ce charmant Docteur*." Wilde says that our Lord "could not stand stupid people, especially those who are made stupid by education": and later in the book (page 111) he says:

"He preached the enormous importance of living completely for the moment." This is the sort of bright remark that irritates me. It is not clever enough to conceal its gross absurdity; for if there is one thing more certain than another, it is that the essence of Christ's teaching was that we were not to look upon this world—with either its sorrows or its pleasures—as the end, but to lay up for ourselves treasure in Heaven. What was carnal, material and selfish in us was to be subordinated to what was spiritual. Taking no thought for the morrow did not mean sanctioning self-indulgence for the moment. To read Wilde upon Christ is like reading Wordsworth in a brothel. Nor is he more distinguished when he writes about himself. "I don't regret for a single moment having lived for pleasure. . . . I threw the pearl of my soul into a cup of wine. I went down the primrose path to the sound of flutes." This is highfalutin sorry stuff, and tragically without meaning.

Of all Oscar Wilde's works, "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" is the most impressive. There is a shrill sexless scream of terror which is the real man and I find it infinitely moving.

Wilde's nature is best exposed by what he writes on page 129 of "De Profundis": "To each of us, different fates are meted out. My lot has been one of public infamy, of long imprisonment, of misery, of ruin, of disgrace; but I am not worthy of it—not yet at any rate."

It might have been said of him as of Julius Cæsar: "Such men as he, be never at heart's ease"; and it would be a terrible confession if you could not extend sympathy to such a tortured, isolated soul. But from the point of view of literature, I do not think any of

Oscar Wilde's self-revelations will rank with the writings of Rousseau, Swift, or any of the great classical Egotists. Foreigners admire authors like Byron who reveal and dramatize themselves, in the same way as they condone crimes which are called "passionel": and writers who under a mask of pontifical impartiality make light of life¹ will always find admirers. But it is an error to suppose that all goodness goes with imbecility; and mocking at life may be entertaining, but it will neither teach you to live nor help you to die. The only excuse for the complacency of such egotists is when it is expressed through the medium of magnificent literature. (Mr. Agate says of Bernard Shaw, "When he condescends to be serious it will be because he has nothing to say.")

One day Oscar Wilde and I were sitting together on the downs in a wood above the lovely country round Wilton.²

I pointed out the landscape that stretched in a map of mist at our feet. "I hate views," he said, "they are only made for bad painters." We talked of books, and he said he wished that he had written "The Dolly Dialogues." In the middle of our entrancing conversation we heard the sound of an early cuckoo close above our heads. At this he got up, and said: "Let us go in—the sound of a cuckoo makes me feel sick." This remark of his gave me a shiver, and when we returned home I realized that he was a man I could never either understand, or care for. There was *no* Oscar Wilde—he was not a human being. I do not say this because of his morals, of which I never wish to hear again, but because his best life lay in his mind, and his mind was non-conducting clay in which more artificial than real roses flourished. But if wit is sufficient, Oscar Wilde's work may survive.

After he had suffered a cruel term of imprisonment he

¹ Morley says in his "Rousseau": "The epigrammatic have by no means a monopoly of shallow thinking."

² The country house of the Earl of Pembroke.

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went to live in Paris. A friend of mine, Teixeira de Mattos, who married Mrs. Willy Wilde, went to see him. Wilde was a complete invalid at the time, and Teixeira found him lying on a sofa surrounded by books, fruit and flowers. He looked up when he saw his friend, and said : " You see I am dying beyond my means."

There is a text in Isaiah xxix, verse 16. " Surely your turning of things upside down shall be esteemed as the potter's clay ; for shall the work say of him that made it : He made me not ? or shall the thing framed say of him that framed it : He had no understanding ? "

* * * * *

I return now to my Journal.

" On the 15th December, 1891, we heard that Prince Eddy was engaged to be married to Princess May of Teck and on the 3rd of January, 1892, we left the Nile and returned to our hotel in Cairo.

" After Alfred Milner, the most authoritative and interesting man in Cairo was Sir Evelyn Baring, and there was no occasion on which he and Lady Baring did not show us the greatest courtesies. The officers quartered in the Barracks were exceptionally good-looking and civil, and when I was not riding with Alfred Milner, they mounted me on beautiful British-bred horses and we rode together over the fences round the race-course. Though Arab ponies hop like fleas from rock to rock in the desert, they cannot jump, and the only occasion I ever remember reading of such a feat was in ' Coningsby,' when the hero mounted on an Arab barb jumped a five-barred gate. It is only in *fiction* that they are fleet as the wind ; in *fact*, they are slow, straight in the shoulder, and have mouths of iron : they never fall in the hills but always stumble on the flat.

" I had heard a good many stories of Colonel Kitchener but never met him till he took me in to dinner at the Residency, after which he came several times to see me. He is not popular, and I can see that neither Mr. Milner

nor Sir Evelyn Baring like him ; but I found him an interesting study ; not really *interesting*, but a study. Though a little underbred, he is not at all vulgar, and though arrogant is not vain ; but he is either very stupid or very clever, and never gives himself away.¹

“ I only met two Orientals of any real intelligence when I was in Egypt : one, the Princess Nazli (the ex-Khedive’s cousin), and the other, Nubar Pasha, an Armenian and an ex-Prime Minister, a man of sixty-eight with a pliable intellect and I am told dubious political morality. In the course of conversation with Princess Nazli she told me that she would rather die than live under the French rule, and raved about the greatness of Sir Evelyn Baring and England. She had been brought up with thirty Turkish slaves, all of whom her husband lived with. One day in a temper she sold these companions of her youth and gave the money to the Turkish Army.

“ When I met Nubar Pasha he talked of Pitt, Palmerston, and Disraeli, and knew everything about politics and our Prime Ministers. I said I thought the Fellaheen backward people and said this could not offend him as he was not an Egyptian, and from what I had heard of his country the Armenians were remarkably clever. He said he was as much an Egyptian as Goschen was an Englishman, and after a little quiet chaff he added :

“ ‘ You know if there were ten Egyptians as clever as you, you would not be occupying this country to-day.’

“ My beloved friend Godfrey Webb joined us in Cairo ; and Mama, Papa, and I went upon a visit to Mr. Wilfred Blunt who lived in the desert.

“ Wilfred Blunt was an enthusiastic Radical, and a poet of rare distinction. He was so beautiful and striking to look at, that everyone of insight excused the steady pleasure he took in himself. Vainer than any peacock, he had an elaborate plan of living like a Bedouin, under

¹ Knowing Lord Kitchener as well as I did later in our acquaintance I think this an excellent comment !

the impression that people of the London world were saying :

“ ‘ Strange man that Blunt !—one never sees him ; he buries himself in the desert, writing, and reading ! ’ whereas I do not think many people in London knew or missed him.

“ We travelled in a dusty train to an isolated station where we were met by Wilfred Blunt, beautifully dressed in golden garments and riding on a gorgeous white donkey. Camels and natives of every description greeted us at the station.

“ There was a strange contrast in Papa’s neat and dapper person, dressed in Lovat mixture, Tyrolese hat, and smart white spats, with the conscious and deliberate dreamer that we followed through a labyrinth of Arab dwellings into an orange grove, where we were presented to his daughter Judith. She was dressed in Bedouin garments with an ivory dagger stuck through her wide silk sash. A long brown cloak—paralysing to all movement—hung gracefully over her shoulders. She showed me her bedroom, a squalid mixture of rags, and shields, with a gun hung upon the walls. I asked the purpose of the gun ; she said it was there to protect her from the horrors of the dangerous Dervishes. I pointed out the distance that separated her from any such possibility, and suggested that a good umbrella would be handier unless she could shoot. She replied that not only Dervishes, but hyenas, vultures, or any strange animal might attack her : and as I knew nothing of the East, I said no more.

“ We all rode in the afternoon to the ostrich farm, which was full of fleas and feathers, and not in any way interesting. Nevertheless I formed a friendship with my host—Wilfred Blunt—which was a pleasure to me. He was a man of great loyalty and affection, and an excellent critic of men and books.

“ Upon our return to Cairo we heard of the death of the Khedive.

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"Sir Evelyn Baring told me that *he* was reported in certain quarters in Cairo as the person who had poisoned him, but the Khedive had been treated by the native doctors for diseases which he had never had, and national prejudice had kept all the English doctors away from him.

"On 8th January, 1891, we went to the Khedive's funeral. It was a wonderful sight. Abdin Square, full of soldiers and a brilliant-coloured crowd, was kept in order by masses of mounted police : Major Fenwick and Colonel Kitchener were using their batons with freedom and violence. An Arab is like a donkey—strong and obstinate. Godfrey Webb, Papa, Mama, and I sat on the wall of the barracks overlooking the huge square. . . . Carriage after carriage of white plumes and brilliant uniforms drove into the square—Ambassadors, Ministers, and officials of all kinds, with appropriate solemnity on their faces.

At last, out of the far corner of the Square, before the Palace front door, emerged a group of men carrying on their heads a coffin, more like a large toy steam-engine than anything I can compare it to. A small funnel, with the Khedive's tarbouche on the top, with all his medals hung round it, and the body of the coffin covered with the common black material that every Fellaheen has on his coffin. Eight of Cook's steam-boat men, in sailor jerseys and turbans, with naked legs, walked in front, holding vast wreaths of violets and laurels, and immediately behind the bier, some fifty or more hired women in sombre rags, with black veils, were wailing in loud, long, shrieks, throwing dust from the ground over their heads, tearing their draperies, flinging their gaunt arms to the sky, and waving shreds of fusty black garments in the wind. This was most impressive, and haunted me like a nightmare. They were merely hired, and their shrieks conventional, but it was weird, and barbaric. After these, came the procession of important people, headed by Sir Evelyn

Baring in his open carriage surrounded by all the French officials.

“ The crowd broke loose at the finish of the procession, and the confusion in the square was terrific. The kaleidoscopic colours delighted us—somewhat like a realistic picture of the Crucifixion, without the peace of the Cross ; the citadel, the mosque, and the minarets towering above and beyond this jabbering, jostling, chaos of humanity. There seemed to be more purpose in the silence of the sunburnt citadel ; more tribute to death in the aloof reverence of all that stone than in the confused concussion of the crowd.

“ 1892. On the 14th of January we heard of the death of Prince Eddy which cast a tremendous gloom on everyone we met. I felt *deeply* for his Mother ¹—who adored him—and longed to write to her, but did not feel that I knew her well enough to justify writing to her ; but I wrote a long letter to the Prince of Wales.²

“ There was a meeting that evening at the Continental Hotel to which we all went and signed a telegram of sympathy to the Queen.³ Sir Evelyn Baring made a short and very moving speech. (I admire him for his competence and authority, and love him for his sweetness and courtesy to strangers.)

“ On the 16th January we went to see the arrival of the new Khedive.

“ The scene, or pageant, of the arrival of the new young Khedive was much the same as what we saw at the funeral of the old one ; but for an unfortunate incident which caused me much embarrassment.

“ Sir Evelyn—who has a true sense of ceremony—was determined to show the Egyptian people that the new reign would not in any way interfere with British authority, and he inaugurated a great Review of the British, Soudanese, and Egyptian troops to celebrate the occasion.

¹ Queen Alexandra.

² King Edward VII.

³ Queen Victoria.

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“He advised me to stay behind his carriage and ride, as I would be in a better position to see the fine sight, and watch all that was taking place. He said he would send an open carriage to take my father, mother, and Godfrey Webb, to the Review, and that their carriage would be placed as near as possible to his outriders—an act of courtesy for which we were grateful. I wanted above all things to ride a beautiful horse, but unfortunately, all my friends in the Barracks had to ride their own horses, so Major Lloyd—to whom I was devoted—and some of the others who were fond of me, advised me to ride a camel, and place myself close behind Sir Evelyn Baring’s Military Escort, where most of the officials of importance would be. They said that they would send me a big camel trained to bands and crowds, upon which I had only to sit still, and after the Review was over they would all look after me. I told them I had never ridden on a camel and asked if it mattered that I had no riding habit, at which they laughed, and said that no one ever wore a riding habit on a camel, and that after all the rides I had had on their horses in the paper chases, the desert, and over the fences of the Cairo race-course, how could I be so silly as to think my skirts and shirts were not good enough for a camel!

“No one ever took more trouble than I did in dressing for the Great Review on the 16th of January (1892). I had not much choice, as I could only wear the white serge skirt, white shirt, and straw hat—with a pen-plume in it of pale lemon—that I had always worn, and which my officer friends had approved of. But though I am not vain, I did not think my clothes good enough for the occasion, and regretted not having brought to Cairo one of my Leicestershire riding habits; the camel did not much matter, but my clothes *did*!

“It was a glorious day of calm heat and steady sunshine, and when my father and mother dropped me on the Parade ground, I gazed at the grand officials,

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cocked and feathered hats, Generals, carriages, and mounted police that were placed in position for the arrival of the new Khedive. My vast camel—covered with ornaments and tassels—was in a kneeling posture, and on either side was guarded by Egyptian servants in gorgeous clothes. I noticed the look of sunless gloom in the half-closed eyes of my charger, and approached him with trepidation. It is not easy to mount a camel, as you are thrown gently forward when you get on, and violently backward when the camel gets up, but I was seated firmly on a thick blue sheep-skin when the process of mounting was over, and given a single rein by which I was to guide the camel through its pierced nostril. There was no saddle, but my right leg was placed round a small wooden post, and my left foot upon a decorated shelf. I had put on my frilled dancing drawers, as serge knickerbockers are always hot, and I thought if my skirts moved about, lace would be more decorative.

“Upon the arrival of Sir Evelyn Baring and the Khedive to take the salute, the Native and British Bands struck up every kind of National Anthem and odd tunes, which were accompanied by the continuous cheering of the crowd. The space was so vast that the worst organized crowd could not interfere with the manoeuvres, and all went well till the Camel Corps was in the act of passing Sir Evelyn and the Khedive. At this moment my mount gave a cumbrous leap into the air, dashed past all the carriages, and joined his corps companions.

“A rein through a nostril gives you no sort of control, and I passed the swells and the salute with my hat at the back of my head, my skirts round my waist, and the head of my camel reposing on my chest. To me, it seemed as if nothing could ever stop us. I presume that my constant tugs hurt the animal's nostril as it did not stop even when the Camel Corps stopped, but rushed on in a storm of dust, past date palms, deserted tombs, and tram-lines, and when at last we came to a standstill

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in the desert I was far from all my friends and dripping with perspiration."

* * * * *

"A few days before we returned to England I received several letters from Paris *lingères*, milliners, and dress-makers, asking to be allowed to make my trousseau as they heard that I was engaged to be married.

"Bewildered at this, I wondered who the bridegroom could be. Alfred Milner, coming in as usual in the afternoon, found me alone, as Mama and Papa had gone to leave farewell cards on our Cairo friends.

" 'I knew I had a rival in Asquith, but look at this ! ' he said smiling, and gave me a cutting out of an English paper saying that I was engaged to marry Lord Rosebery.

"I told him that I had not seen Lord Rosebery to speak to for a long time, and that I was the last woman in Europe that he would ever dream of marrying. He asked me if I intended to contradict it : I replied I would as soon advertise myself by saying that I was not going to marry the Pope ! "

* * * * *

"I was profoundly unhappy when I said good-bye to Alfred Milner.¹ I knew that our long talks, desert rides, and all the freedom of our companionship could never come again. It was not so much what he felt for me, but what I felt for him that clouded our parting."

End of my journey to Egypt.

* * * * *

When I returned to London, my brother-in-law Ribbles-

¹ Before leaving Cairo, I asked Alfred Milner if he would not like to return to England. I said that Sir Algernon West, who had been Mr. Gladstone's secretary, was retiring, and I was certain that if Milner cared to succeed him, Arthur Balfour would appoint him as Chairman of the Board of Inland Revenue. To my delight he said he would like this, and after I had written to Arthur Balfour, Alfred Milner was given the post.

dale told me that Lord Rosebery had been much concerned over the silly rumour of his engagement to me, and thought I should have contradicted it. I told Ribblesdale to tell Rosebery that I was sure he had not been worried by letters from dressmakers asking to make his underclothes, and that I could not imagine anything more vulgar than advertising myself by publishing that I was not going to be married to him. Nevertheless, I noticed that Lord Rosebery avoided me when we met.

My husband told me that a few weeks before the announcement of our engagement was published in the newspapers, he was walking in Rotten Row with Lord Rosebery, when I galloped past them.

Anxious to warn his Home Secretary against a courtship which he thought fraught with danger, if not with disaster, he said :

"That was Miss Margot Tennant, I believe. My dear Asquith, I advise you to read 'Dodo,' if you have not already done so—there is a great deal of truth in it."

"Dodo" was a novel that made a sensation at the time of publication as the heroine—a pretentious donkey with the heart and brains of a linnæa—was supposed to be myself.

The author denied it, but his brother, Arthur Benson—the Eton master—and Randall Davidson¹ came to see me to express their regret for what had occurred, and both my friends and my enemies embarrassed me and amused themselves by calling me Miss "Dodo."² I told everyone I could not have been the heroine, as I was not beautiful, and did not hunt in summer ; nevertheless, there was an exact description of my sitting-room and other details, which proved that the author had me in his mind when he wrote the book.

Lord Rosebery's remark to my future husband hurt

¹ The Archbishop of Canterbury.

² The Prince of Wales (King Edward) addressed me as "Miss Dodo" when we met at a ball, which gave great pleasure to bystanders.

me profoundly. I had been devoted to him since the age of sixteen, and though I had not seen him since Lady Rosebery's death, we had never had a quarrel of any sort ; on the contrary, the last letter I wrote to Lord Rosebery was one of thanks for a volume of Tennyson's poems which he had given me : and, more than this, I looked upon him as my friend.

My husband married me shortly after this incident, and he and the Prime Minister were constantly together. Nevertheless, I did all I could to avoid being alone with Lord Rosebery. One day while he was our host at the Durdans, he insisted on my going alone for a walk with him. He was anxious to keep on close terms with his Home Secretary, as Henry was the one link he had in the estranging disputes which arose between himself and the leader¹ of the House of Commons—and knowing that I was fond of Harcourt, he wanted to get back to his former friendship with me. Lord Rosebery broke a rather stiff silence by feigning surprise at my attitude ; but when I asked him if he would not have prevented my marriage if he could, he did not deny it. He said that he was not the only one of my friends who had been doubtful as to my future happiness ; to which I replied that if it was *my* happiness over which he had been concerned *I* was the person to whom he should have gone, instead of giving oracular warnings to my fiancé. I did not want fair-weather friends to stand by me when I was on the top of the wave, and added that if in future I had any matrimonial troubles he would be the last man I would go to for sympathy, or advice. He knew by my indignation that I would forgive him, and after he had praised my husband, and consoled me by his lovely smile and lively wit, we returned from our walk as if nothing had ever disturbed us.

Although this incident was personal, and trifling, it shook my confidence, and was a forerunner of what occurred later in our political relationship, when Sir

¹ Sir William Harcourt.

Edward Grey, Lord Haldane, and my husband nearly backed the wrong horse in their choice between serving under the leadership of Lord Rosebery or Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman.

But my new, and valued friendship with Sir Alfred Milner, was of more consequence to me than wrangles with Rosebery, as when someone of my temperament marries, their one idea is to keep the friends they have made, and convert their husbands into caring for them. Alfred Milner and I had had so much happiness in Egypt together—our rides, our talks, and the appealing influence of his lonely nature—that I feared my marriage might estrange him. But, though I did not know it, Milner was one of my husband's oldest friends, so my fears were ill-founded, and we saw one another as often as possible.

Everyone who knew Milner was devoted to him, but when he went as High Commissioner to South Africa the Conservative Government did not know him, and put their faith in Cecil Rhodes—a man of coarser fibre and less integrity. In spite of repeated warnings from Milner, they listened to Rhodes, and I remember Sir William Harcourt saying to my husband: "Milner has gone to South Africa with war in his pocket."

I do not think this was true, but "the man on the spot" is seldom right and Cecil Rhodes had persuaded Arthur Balfour that the Boers would never fight.

In January, 1903, I had a letter from Milner from Johannesburg in answer to one of mine in which I begged him to keep an open mind upon giving South Africa her freedom, as we of the Liberal Party felt passionately on the subject, and would fight any, and *every* attempt to coerce the Boers. He defended his policy *very* strongly.

It was a time of political excitement in this country when even the Liberal Party was divided over the South African settlement. Sir Edward Grey, Lord Haldane, and my husband—who had backed Balfour

in the Boer War—were in agreement with Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, and insisted on a generous settlement ; Lord Rosebery was on the fence, and the Conservative Party—under the leadership of Arthur Balfour—did their utmost to frustrate every attempt on our side to give the Boers a Constitution of their own.

I remember an important Liberal (whose name I will not mention), coming to me and saying that he, and many of his friends, had all their money invested in South African mines, and if the day came when we would carry out our pledges of freedom for the Boers they would all be ruined, and Asquith—who was supposed to influence Campbell-Bannerman—would be the most unpopular man in these islands ; we Liberals were wrong, and Milner was absolutely right when he opposed any such madness. I replied that it was Henry's fixed determination if ever we came into power to give South Africa back her freedom.

I well understood how much Milner had suffered over a long and unsatisfactory war of which he had repeatedly warned the British Government ; nor could I blame him for his irritation with the views held by the Liberal Party. But the men he had to work with were overstrained and not of his own calibre, nor were they in touch with the bulk of British opinion.

It is not my intention in this book to discuss the rights and wrongs of any political controversy ; I am merely writing of men I knew in public affairs ; but in justice to my husband and the Liberal Party I can say without fear of contradiction that nothing in the history of this country has ever reflected more credit on them than the final settlement of South Africa.

* * * * *

Although Alfred Milner had a concentrated—almost violent—mind, he was never physically robust, and told me that in his youth he had been both delicate and

unhappy. After winning every distinction at Balliol, he started his political career by standing for Harrow as a Liberal, where my husband spoke for him, and when he was beaten he went into journalism and wrote for the *Pall Mall Gazette*, then edited by John Morley. It needed a man of more insight and generosity than Lord Morley to recognize the rare quality and sensibility of Lord Milner's nature. But, speaking for myself, I did not find his political convictions easy to follow. A mixture of Radical and bureaucrat, he concealed under a diffident manner a strong will, and no man could force his hand. As a criticism, I should say that his insight into human nature was limited ; and his mind being a little stiff he never gave it full play in a society of which he was shy.

He attracted the devotion of men even more than of women, and had a flavour of his own which is impossible to put upon paper. I sometimes think that if he had found earlier in life the love and understanding that he found later, in his perfect wife, Alfred Milner would have risen to the highest position in the State. I never heard him say a harsh word, or do a mean action, and when he died he left mourners in the north, south, east and west of the British Empire.

CHAPTER VI
SOME CHARACTER SKETCHES

EARL KITCHENER: THE EARL OF
BALFOUR: QUEEN ALEXANDRA

IT was only when I knew Lord Kitchener intimately that I realized how difficult it would be to say whether he was, or was not, a very clever man, and nothing that I have read about him (I have not read Sir George Arthur's admirable biography) has given me a portrait of the man as I knew him; you may write every fact about a man's birth, up-bringing, education, and achievement, and yet not succeed in making a living portrait of him. "K."—as I, and most of his friends called him—was a very remarkable man, different from any of the famous figures that I have known.

He was not at all English, yet I do not think any country but this could have produced him. In some ways obvious,—and always imposing—he was slim, observant, suspicious, and simple; and though he attracted the great British public, he repelled all but a few devoted personal friends by his abrupt manner, ruthlessness, and non-conducting silence.

What I liked best about him was that in spite of welcoming popularity, he was not vain; and he detested war. He told me that he had fought with the French in the Franco-Prussian war and had spent most of his life in soldiering, but that he had never seen a war out of which any permanent peace had come; and that while fighting brought out great individual heroism, it was futile in settling great international disputes.

When in August, 1914, my husband told me that he

had persuaded Lord Kitchener to delay his return to Egypt and take the War Office (which he had done several days before the Press started its clamour) I was not at all convinced that he was right. I said that in spite of his great name, he had lived so much among subject races that I feared he would not get on smoothly with Europeans ; and his unconvertible habit of mind, and mistrust of men like Lord Cromer and Lord Milner, might prevent him working well with a British Cabinet.

My husband said he was aware of this, but that he was the only man who by his prestige and authority could get sufficient recruits to create our new Army, and quoted what my daughter Elizabeth had said : " Kitchener is a great poster."

In every way the Prime Minister's appointment was justified, and as Secretary of State for War Lord Kitchener made fewer mistakes than most men might have made placed in a similar situation. But he had never learnt how to delegate work—a talent without which my husband said to me no man of affairs could ever become pre-eminent—and took on his own shoulders duties which Mr. McKenna at the Home Office, and other men were better qualified to perform. He had so much confidence in himself and his own ability, that he made no use of Lord Haldane's¹ carefully worked out scheme of Territorials, which caused a certain amount of criticism at

¹ Henry was deeply distressed over Haldane's exclusion from the first Coalition Cabinet, and should have written to him. (It was unlike him to neglect any act of loyalty or courtesy to such an old friend, and it was only after my husband's death that Elizabeth Haldane told me of it.) Seeing how unhappy he was, I motored to see two members of our Cabinet to beg them to strengthen the Prime Minister's hand by resigning rather than allow such an outrage. But they seemed to think that having achieved his great work in the War Office, Haldane's counsel was less valuable. Nor did they believe the Conservative members of the Coalition would give way. Lord Haldane later on was treated by the ignorant Press and public to a campaign of such disgraceful calumny that he joined the Labour Party, after which we saw little of him. He had a rare and lovable character.

the time. The British Army owed more to Lord Haldane than to any Minister of War in my lifetime, and but for him, we should not have achieved the perfection of the Expeditionary Force. The task of creating a new Army was too vast for one man to undertake, and there was considerable confusion in the early months of the War. The internment camps, which should have been under Civil administration, were mismanaged, the Irish mishandled, and the recruits who flocked to London from every part of the British Isles to join his army, were not properly registered. Nevertheless, there were no complaints, and nothing but adulation was poured upon Lord Kitchener by an enthusiastic public and his devoted personal friends. Looking back to-day, I am convinced that there was no man living who could have created our noble voluntary Army as efficiently and rapidly as Lord Kitchener. He had the spirit of a great commander, and won for himself, by his prestige and originality, an unrivalled popularity. In a short time there was nothing that the man in the street would not have done at his bidding.

My brother, the Right Hon. H. J. Tennant, was Under-Secretary of State for War, and was in Lord Kitchener's confidence from the day he went to the War Office.

I do not propose to go into Lord Kitchener's great work at the War Office, or his relations with Cabinet colleagues, but only write of him as I knew him.

In spite of his powerful domination and rough-and-ready charm, I never saw any sign of profound intellect or great reasoning power in Kitchener's single-track mind ; but he had something better : he was intensely human, and with his first-rate intelligence and incalculable instinct understood the majority of his fellow-men. He was a born diplomatist, wise, patient, and reserved, and my husband—who never lost faith in him—always said he would have been a great ambassador.

From the first day of the War Lord Kitchener and my husband understood one another. They saw each other every hour of the day and worked happily together, which was the more remarkable as two men of more different characters, methods, education, and temperament could not have been found. Lord Kitchener understood the value of publicity, delighted in popularity, and, although neither a flatterer nor a snob, had a reverence for rank, and at one time believed in the power of the Press. He also preferred achieving his purpose by roundabout rather than simple methods, all of which characteristics were foreign to the Prime Minister.

While he enjoyed society, I never met anyone more unaware of rank, less interested in publicity, or more indifferent to the Press than my husband; and no clamour could force his hand: it was almost enough that public opinion should go against a man for him to defend him, and he would have agreed with Hazlitt, who in his essay—written in 1821—upon “Living to One’s Self” says: “The public is pusillanimous, and cowardly because it is weak. It cries you up or runs you down out of mere caprice and levity. We may safely say the public is the dupe of public opinion, not its parent.”

When high events are making history—such as war—it is better not to take the public into your confidence, and one of the few times I ever saw my husband really angry was when he heard that one of his colleagues had dined with Pressmen. He told him that he himself would see that the newspapers were properly informed of what was taking place at the Front; that he wished no leakage of Cabinet secrets, as it was all-important that the enemy should know as little as possible of our plans and our resources.

What first drew Lord Kitchener and me together was our mutual affection for (Blanche) Lady Waterford, a woman of saintly character with whom I had made

friends while hunting with her father the Duke of Beaufort.¹ He showed a tenderness when talking of her which touched me, and proved that there were unsuspected depths in his incommunicable nature.

Although he had no pettiness and an easy temper and disposition, Lord Kitchener was not an elastic man to work with, and his dumb taciturnity at Cabinet meetings often made things difficult. He knew nothing about British politics, or the consideration due to men of different opinions, and with the exception of the Prime Minister, he was not on intimate terms with any of his colleagues. He told me he had a poor opinion of them, which, as they comprised men of the highest intelligence, amused me.

It is not easy to estimate a man whose instinct is stronger than his reason, but though it would be untrue to say he had an original mind, he had an unusual personality, and I never met anyone at all like Lord Kitchener. His fine figure, bold presence, and desert eye, gave a misleading impression of candour, and it was only with the few people that he really cared for that he was unreserved. He had had little opportunity of living with his equals and was inclined to manoeuvre for position as he had done for a large part of his life with Orientals. Nevertheless, there was a sort of artlessness in his slimness which always interested me, and in all his relations with myself and my husband Lord Kitchener showed true loyalty and affection.

Among his private proclivities he was fond of Art, and in the course of his travels had collected many valuable possessions. When offered by Mayors and Corporations the freedom of their cities, he always made it clear what he wished them to give him, as he did not approve of the heavy gold caskets lined with plush which are the usual costly and foolish form of presentation.

This passion for collecting, and a certain Oriental love of getting the better of an adversary, gave rise to

¹ The present Duke of Beaufort's grandfather.

many stories, most of them probably untrue, but as they throw such a human and lovable light on his character I cannot resist quoting one or two.

The late Lord Chesham told me that after the Boer War he was sitting alone in the billiard-room of an hotel in Cape Town watching Kitchener playing billiards with the leader of a scallywag troop that had fought in the War. There was an old-fashioned marker on the wall where you pushed on your score.

While his opponent was playing, Lord Kitchener lit a large cigar and pushed his score to the end of the marking-board with his elbow. Lord Chesham was dumbfounded at seeing this, and when Kitchener's turn came to play, wondered if the other man would notice the score. He did not wonder long, as the leader of the troop clapped him vigorously on the shoulder, and said :

"Did you see that?—My God ! I *love* that man !" They exchanged a smile of confidence after looking at the score.

When my husband paid his first visit to the Front in 1915 he was accompanied by Lord Kitchener, received by Lord French, and conducted by them, their aides-de-camp, and several distinguished Field-Mmarshals to see the Cloth Hall at Ypres. This marvellous building had been bombarded for weeks by the Germans, but though much of the roof had gone, most of the famous statues in the niches of the façade were intact.

The Commander-in-Chief, the Secretary of State, the Prime Minister, and their attendants were all gazing at what remained of the Cloth Hall, when a youthful subaltern nudged my husband, and pointing to Lord Kitchener—whose eyes were immovably fixed upon the stone figures—said :

"Do you see those statues, sir ? They have been bombed by the German Army for months, but have never been in such danger as they are to-day."

My dear friend, Sir Walter Lawrence, who was in

India when Lord Kitchener was Commander-in-Chief, told me that one morning he was riding, as was his wont, round the hill of Jakko—a Himalayan hill round which cluster the chalets of Simla, made famous by the imperishable stories of Rudyard Kipling. Suddenly his horse shied as two men slithered down the grass slopes on to the road at his feet. They were strangely clad in dressing-gowns, pyjamas, and shooting boots, and carried large bundles of standard roses in their arms. They were smart A.D.C.s of the Commander-in-Chief, and fashionable young men of late habits and little knowledge of horticulture.

"What are you doing at this early hour?" asked Sir Walter.

"K. is keen about his garden," they replied, "and wants some really good roses, so he sent us up to have a look at the garden above the church."

The garden belonged to an Anglo-Indian who was an enthusiastic botanist.

"But," said Sir Walter, "the garden is private, and the owner is home on leave; when he returns he will miss his rare rose trees."

"Precisely," said one of the A.D.C.s, "that being so, Kitchener thought he might as well take the roses."

Upon a visit that the Commander-in-Chief paid to a distinguished Rajah in India, his host asked him if there was anything among his possessions that he would like to have, at which Lord Kitchener pointed to a sabre of steel and ivory that hung upon the wall.

"Alas!" replied the Rajah, "I cannot give you that, as it has belonged to my family for hundreds of years."

When the Rajah paid a return visit to Lord Kitchener his host asked him if there was anything that he could give him as a souvenir of his visit. Pointing to an Oriental china vase, the Rajah said that it was what he would most like to have, at which Kitchener said he

could not part with what had belonged to his family for so many years.

Two years later, Lord Kitchener and the Rajah met again.

"If you still care for my Oriental vase," Lord Kitchener said, "I will be delighted to give it to you," and the Rajah replied that in return for this favour he would be delighted to send Lord Kitchener the steel and ivory sabre. They parted with cordiality. But when the two presents were under examination they proved to have been made in Birmingham.

This story may be an invention but it was told me by an Anglo-Indian who added that none of these idiosyncrasies detracted from his popularity.

What attracted Lord Kitchener to my husband was his belief in his loyalty and judgment, and what attracted my husband to Lord Kitchener was that at a time when his patience was being tried to the utmost by friction in the Cabinet, the petty quarrels of generals and admirals, and the hysteria of the Press, it was a relief to converse with a man of such inexhaustible courage and optimism. The hurry and horror of war, and the ignorant criticisms of the conduct of it, brought the Prime Minister and Kitchener daily into more intimate relations : nevertheless, in no way surrendering to public clamour he came to the conclusion that Kitchener's talents would be best employed in a delicate diplomatic mission and with his eager consent resolved to send him to Russia. His decision was met by the approval of the King, the Cabinet, and the country. The night before Lord Kitchener left for Scotland to sail in the *Hampshire* on his Russian mission, he came to 10, Downing Street to say good-bye to my husband. They remained talking alone together for a long time. On his way downstairs he looked into my sitting-room. He told me he was delighted to be going to Russia, that he had had enough of the British Ministers, and only regretted leaving one man, and that was my husband. I looked at his tall,

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distinguished figure and vigorous face, and taking both his hands in mine, bade him God-speed.¹

I will only add the closing passage in the tribute which my husband paid to Lord Kitchener in the House of Commons of June 21, 1916 :

He brought to the War Office the same sleepless energy, the same rare resourcefulness, the same masterful personality which never failed him in any of the fields of action in which during nearly fifty years he was called, on behalf of his country, to play his part. His career has been cut short while still in the full tide of unexhausted powers and possibilities. I will not at this moment make an analysis of his qualities, or an appraisal of his services to the State. I would only say this, and I cannot say more, that no man I have known had less reason to shrink from submitting his life to the

pure eyes
and perfect witness of all-judging Jove.

THE EARL OF BALFOUR

When the Earl of Balfour died, this country lost not only one of its few men of outstanding distinction, but a man of unrivalled charm, subtlety, and attainments. If sanity is akin to genius—which I believe it to be—the two men of public affairs that have been most conspicuous for this underestimated quality were my husband, and Lord Balfour. Though complete contrasts in mind, temperament, and character, they were on terms of

¹ My daughter Elizabeth told me that she met Lord Kitchener outside the Cabinet room walking to the front door of 10, Downing Street that evening. The following is her account of that meeting :

“In the hall just outside the Cabinet room I ran into Lord Kitchener. We laughed and chaffed a little, and I congratulated him on a dialectical success. (Having been attacked by various Members of Parliament, he had received them privately at the War Office and ‘wiped the floor’ with them.) He was purring like a Persian cat, delighted by a success on unfamiliar territory. Then, suddenly going serious, he said to me : ‘I haven’t made many friends in my new walk of life. And if I were to die to-morrow your father is the only man I would count on to be loyal to my memory.’

“I said, ‘Nonsense,’ and he said, ‘Good-bye.’ The next day he was drowned.”

intimacy with one another, and attracted in varying degrees great personal affection.

My husband was a lawyer, a scholar, and a man who added to his trained mind a prodigious memory. He read every book—from a dictionary to a detective story, and had few literary exclusions. In spite of preferring to spend his leisure with his family rather than in Society, he enjoyed *both*, and had an insight into character which rarely failed him. Arrogant, though modest, he left nothing to chance, and had the reasoned judgment and unconscious authority that made him a born leader of men. He could master every subject with such rapidity and precision that he enjoyed work ; and, as he never possessed enough money to court leisure, he had little opportunity of playing games.

Arthur Balfour was not a scholar, prided himself on a poor memory, liked reading but did not care for books, loved music and science, detested work, adored leisure, and left everything to chance. He enjoyed society, delighted in conversation, and like many men who have had little sex experience was impossible to shock. Beyond an inveterate distaste for wit levelled at the expense of religion, I never heard him check, or censure, anything that was said. Brilliantly as he talked, I did not feel that he had the emotional ground-swell of the rare natures that make conversation influenceable.

Before I knew him he was fond of stalking and tennis, and I am told was equally proficient with his rifle as with his racket ; but after I met him, he spent a large part of his time playing lawn tennis and golf, and would sit up late in country houses, before cards were fashionable, playing pencil games and answering questions in a game called "Clumps."¹ He enjoyed not only his guests, but a house full of young people—chiefly Eustace's and Gerald's children—and had in his sister

¹ Laura and I invented this game, which was evolved out of "Twenty Questions" and for those who do not play cards, it is an excellent diversion as well as an admirable exercise for the intellect.

Alice Balfour a courteous, considerate, and perfect hostess.

The intellectual atmosphere at Whittingehame was always of a high order as Lord Balfour's brothers and sisters were all remarkable, and in his two sisters-in-law,—Lady Betty and Lady Frances Balfour,—he found companions of rare sympathy, intelligence, and devotion. Whether the conversation was upon books, politics, or music, the best contributions came from his own family and I never stayed at Whittingehame without a feeling of increased intellectual grasp, and increased vigour of imagination.

He took a deep interest in the science of medicine—drugs, doctors, and his own health ; and though I always told him he overvalued sleep, he profoundly disagreed with me. The habits of his daily life were fixed, and he was surrounded by a conformable and devoted family who saw that they were never interrupted.

He had a life of his own, more speculative and scientific than my husband's, but they shared something in common of the same independence of thought. Arthur Balfour liked being liked, but I was never quite certain how much he valued personal attachment ; he never appeared to me to be as unhappy when he parted with his private secretaries as my husband was when Sir Eric Drummond and Mr. Vaughan Nash left him. Kind, considerate, and sympathetic, as he always was to me and to all his friends, there was a side of his nature which I never understood : he was embarrassed in the face of sorrow, and I do not think his classical repose of mind came entirely from controlled emotion. It is always hazardous to express an opinion upon the depth of other people's feelings, and I have been told by those who do not agree with me, that Arthur Balfour's were of such passionate intensity that he dared not show them. It is therefore probable that I am wrong ; but being a simple person I think it more loyal to your Self to show, than to segregate your feeling. Profound feeling

is not easy to conceal ; and though self-control is essential for your own, and for other people's happiness, disinterested emotion is not to be despised.

I prefer a heart on a sleeve to a heart on a shelf and I have known men who were inadequately appreciated half their lifetime from this restraining practice. It was in his writings that Arthur Balfour showed the fine quality of his nature, and if you read them carefully you will find in all of them the true pulse of his emotions.

Arthur Balfour was born with perfect equilibrium, an admirable temper, and iron nerves. I have often seen him masterful, cool, and collected in debates which aroused prolonged party fury in the House of Commons. I have sat by his side on several occasions when his motor skidded down dangerous slopes, and one day when it went with a crash against a lorry in the dark. He never moved in his seat, and we continued our conversation as if nothing had occurred. He had an equal command of his mental qualities. His intellect was of a less powerful fibre than my husband's, and was set at a different angle. There were no rough edges to his mind, it was as sharp as a razor, and he could make mince-meat of anyone who had the temerity to argue with him.

It was in consequence of this sharpness and resource that he left everything to chance. To prepare a speech¹ was not only antagonistic, but an impossibility to him ; and he was probably the greatest improvisatore that ever addressed a public meeting. But if he rarely roused an audience, he could rely with confidence upon the applause of every member of the House of Commons by his masterly and unrivalled powers of debate.

He was a self-indulgent man of simple tastes. He liked the moves in a political contest more than the cause, and saw no particular reason for exerting his

¹ Congratulating him one day in the House of Commons upon a reply he made to a speech of my husband's, he said : " My dear, I was thankful that I had to speak *after*, and not *before*, Asquith."

intellect. The Eastern proverb : "Haste comes of the Evil One, Leisure, of God" was singularly applicable to Lord Balfour.

It would be difficult to find a greater contrast in mind and temperament than my husband and Arthur Balfour, but in spite of this I doubt if another case can be recorded in our Parliamentary annals of two political antagonists combating each other—in both Houses of Parliament—who remained throughout their lives on terms of friendship. To have accomplished this needs sanity, and a sense of proportion sufficiently remarkable to come under the category of genius.

A convinced Pacifist, Liberal, and Free-trader, I differed too much from him to write of Lord Balfour's tenure of office, or political career—nor would it be appropriate in a chapter of this length. All that I purport to do, is to write of him as I knew him, and outline a friendship that never failed, and lasted from the day we met till he died.

I have a vivid recollection of the occasions upon which I first met everyone of mark whose friendship I retained : Gladstone, Rosebery, Edward Grey, Jowett, Symonds, the late and present Lady Wemyss, Frances Balfour, Frances Horner, Edgar D'Abernon, Haldane, Hartington, Lord Spencer, the Duke of Beaufort, Godfrey Webb, St. John Brodrick, Harry Cust, Barrie, Birrell, Pembroke and Arthur Balfour. But—after Gladstone and Jowett—the man that made the most impression upon me was Lord Balfour.

In the London season of 1882, I knew few people outside the hunting and political world, and it was an event for me when Lady Waterford¹ asked me to dine with her. We had formed a friendship when I stayed at Badminton and hunted with her father's hounds.

On arriving, I observed that the only person I knew in the room was my hostess. It was an occasion that I can never forget, as it was there that I met the two

¹ Blanche Waterford, to whom Lord Kitchener was devoted.



Lord Oxford and Lord Balfour watching a lawn tennis match
at Glenconner (North Berwick)

men of social and political prestige—afterwards the leaders of the circle called “Souls”¹—who became my lifelong friends.

I was placed next to Arthur Balfour, and opposite me sat Lord Pembroke.² I do not remember what we talked about, but I joined in a lively discussion between Balfour and Pembroke.

(Some years after this, George Pembroke told me that he had been so interested in the conversation that he wrote a line upon his menu asking Lady Waterford the name of the young lady in black, with red shoes, sitting by the side of Arthur Balfour.)

The next time I saw Lord Balfour was in St. Paul’s Cathedral. My sister Laura and I had been to the Communion Service, and as we were going out she told me to go and ask Alfred Lyttelton—who was walking down the aisle with Arthur Balfour—if he would come to Glen that autumn. Laura was not at all shy, but, having taken a fancy to Alfred Lyttelton, thought it more becoming to send an emissary than invite him to Glen herself. I thought it would be invidious to ask one without the other, and they both accepted the invitation.

When Arthur Balfour came to Glen, the question of Home Rule for Ireland dominated the political situation. My father, and all my relations, were fanatical Gladstonians, and I was the only member of the family that

¹ The Souls was a foolish name given by fashionable society to myself and my friends. Through the accident of my sister Laura Lyttelton’s death in the first year of her marriage we were thrown together and made lasting friendships. Since those days there has been no group in society of equal distinction, loyalty, and influence. It was in my father’s house that political antagonists—Mr. Gladstone and Lord Randolph Churchill, and other Front Bench opponents—first met and we were entertained together in the most beautiful country houses in England. None of us claimed any kind of superiority or practised any sort of exclusion.

² George, Earl of Pembroke, one of the handsomest and most attractive men I ever knew.

disputed with them over Home Rule.¹ Every day of my life I heard my father—and other worshippers—repeat with monotonous iteration that Gladstone was the only man that could save the country, or that understood the downtrodden, miserable, misgoverned Irish people.

(That Ireland was cruelly misgoverned was obvious to the least intelligent, but if anyone at any time—now, or heretofore—can tell me that they understand the Irish people, I doubt if I shall believe them.)

In spite of little knowledge, I was always passionately interested in politics, and Mr. Gladstone was my idol. When I found that our new and distinguished guest did not share this idolatry, my admiration for him was damped ; nevertheless I listened with rapt attention to everything he said, not only upon people and politics, but about matters of more profundity, and Arthur Balfour made a complete conquest of every member of my family.

One day, after Laura and I had shown him the gardens and the moors, I received a shock when, looking at the house, he said he did not much care for the Scottish style of baronial architecture. Glen was devised by Bryce, and, in spite of a roof covered with pinnacled turrets, stone lions and other ornaments, it has great beauty, and as I love every inch of it, Arthur's criticism filled me with sadness. But everything was forgiven to a man of such courtesy and magnetism. We got up early to play lawn tennis, and sat up late playing pencil games, in all of which he excelled.

On his second visit to Glen, I went into his bedroom to see if he had all that he wanted, and found a volume of Jane Austen and one by St. Beuve near his bed. I asked him if they were the authors he most cared for, and he said that he seldom travelled without a book written by one or other of them. He told me he liked tales of adventure, and could not endure a novel that

¹ I was completely converted later in my life by my friend Herbert Gladstone, and my husband.

ended sadly. As some of the novels that I most admired had sad ends, this seemed strange to me, and I said I was much more afraid of feeling too little than feeling too much in life. He greeted this remark with a circulating smile, but without further self-reference.

I never remember meeting a famous man who was so difficult to bore in society as Arthur Balfour. Though he could listen to anyone who could tell him anything, he appeared equally attentive to people who could tell him nothing. In the House of Commons set orations did not impress him, and, being the best debater in the House, he listened with spineless indifference to the highly prepared oratory of his Cabinet colleagues. But in society, he appeared equally cordial and animated with whomever he was talking to. I have heard him discussing doctors, drugs, chows, and motors, with women to whom I would hardly have mentioned the weather. Twitting him once about this, I said that as we spent so much time in talking, I thought that he should use his influence to weighten, rather than lighten, conversation. He retorted that he had never observed me encouraging fallacies or platitudes, and added :

“A dull mind is an excellent thing—not acquired—but however you may modify it by education it remains the same.”

I said that some people lit up conversation into the uniformity of a candelabrum, but a good many profound remarks passed unnoticed in the glare of glittering conversation, and in the end, too much cleverness was exhausting.

Everyone enjoys what they do well ; and probably quite unconsciously, Arthur Balfour perceived the pleasure we all took in his society. The desire to please is one that will always animate human beings, and it was not from any form of flattery—as no one was freer from humbug than Lord Balfour—but, just as some men enjoy vitrines, he enjoyed small talk. His pleasure in people made him a flattering companion, as it is a quality that is recipro-

cated, and no one can deny that he was the greatest ornament that has ever decorated our social world.

With few exceptions, I have never known the same excitement talking to anyone that I felt while conversing with Arthur Balfour.

When I consulted him as to the wisdom of writing my Autobiography, he urged me to do it, saying :

"If you can write as you talk, my dear, and be indifferent to what *I*, or anyone else may say, your book will be a success."

No one contributed more than he did to brilliant conversation, but it is always difficult to quote samples of a man's wit ; and even George Meredith failed when he tried to indicate the genius of "Diana of the Crossways."

Balfour shared my husband's distaste for George Meredith's style of writing, and, when I was praising "The Egoist," said :

"Meredith thinks he has made an epigram, when he has made a conundrum."

I could give many other instances of his conversation,¹

¹ Mr. Henry Bell told me that when he was in the United States an American told him this story. I give it in Mr. Bell's own words :

"In the course of conversation with a Wall Street magnate his host said to Arthur Balfour : 'Before you leave New York City, Mr. Balfour, I would like to show you our new Woolworth Buildings,' at which Mr. Balfour said he would be delighted.

"The appointment made, Mr. Balfour and his American friend stood opposite the towering heights of the prodigious erection.

"Now, Mr. Balfour, you are looking at the world's greatest building. It has fifty stories, and contains in the daytime four hundred principals, and three thousand clerks !"

"Remarkable," said Mr. Balfour, after a prolonged inspection through his eyeglasses—up and down, to and fro.

"It is nine hundred feet in height, and was constructed from basement to summit in one year and eight months."

"Mr. Balfour, after further gazing upon the building, up and down, to and fro : 'Really !'

"It is built entirely of steel and concrete and is non-inflammable."

"Mr. Balfour, after a third survey, up and down, to and fro : 'What—what a pity !'"

but without their setting they would lose much of their point.

The last time I saw Arthur Balfour in London was when I lunched alone with him on July 28, 1928 (a few days before he left for his last visit to Whittingehame). He had been indisposed for some time, and, fearing to tire him, I said to his friendly and delightful butler, Colman, upon my arrival :

"I am keeping my motor, so mind you announce it the moment you think his lordship is tired."

To which he replied :

"That's all right, my lady : my master is not like your lord is, he enjoys seeing everybody if he feels up to it ; indeed, I think he would be less well but for the friends that are always coming around."

I found him sitting alone in his dim, rather formal, library in Carlton Gardens. We talked of early days at Glen, various members of "the Souls," George Curzon, Harry Cust, Mary Wemyss, Baffy Dugdale¹ and the book he was writing ; I urged him to spend every moment of his time on his Autobiography and reminded him of many good sayings of his which he had forgotten. I told him of my first visit to Hawarden, and what Mr. Gladstone had said of him, and asked him if it was true that Disraeli's attacks in the House of Commons were more deadly than his rival's. He said there could be no greater myth : that when roused, Mr. Gladstone without any preparation could pulverize all his opponents, as his moral indignation was always more formidable than Disraeli's facile ridicule. He added :

"Mr. Gladstone's flexible rhetoric was a dangerous instrument in debate."

He was alert, interested, and charming ; but he told me that he had strange pains round his heart that made him uncomfortable, and that he found walking tired him.

¹ Mrs. Dugdale is Lady Frances Balfour's daughter and Lord Balfour's niece. She has been entrusted to write Lord Balfour's life and it could not have been put in more competent hands.

I looked at his beautiful eyes, and wondered if I would ever see him again to such an advantage.

I motored down to Fishers Hill, where he was living with his brother Gerald, in July, 1929—and this was the last time I ever saw him.

Writing of a man that I was as devoted to as Arthur Balfour, it is necessary for me to differentiate between a private opinion and a public estimation ; and could I have chosen a career for Lord Balfour I would never have chosen the strife and stress of party politics. His rare natural gifts would have ensured for him a more enduring reputation had they been turned to literature or to science. To be a power in politics, you must have strong convictions, a constructive mind, and be in sympathy with an electorate of which he knew little, and as Prime Minister, he was not as successful as men of infinitely less capacity.

When I first met him he was already immersed in politics, and, joining Randolph Churchill, Drummond Wolff, and Gorst, he became the leader in the House of Commons of a famous and formidable opposition within the ranks of his own party. The activities of the Fourth Party changed the destiny of the Conservatives with greater certainty than Disraeli ever changed it.

I never met Gorst, or Drummond Wolff, but I knew Lord Randolph Churchill, and have no doubt that his genius, charm and gay adventurous ambition, appealed to Lord Balfour more than his private character. No one saw with greater clearness than Randolph Churchill the steady torpor that was overtaking the Conservative Party, and he determined that he would democratize it and make it popular.

Lord Balfour cared little for popularity, and less for Democracy, but Lord Randolph amused him ; and just as a man watches a contest at chess, Balfour saw that certain moves that his intrepid colleague was making were likely to win the game.

After tennis and golf, the game¹ that Arthur Balfour most enjoyed was politics. You will hear people of conventional opinion and little insight say that he was "too philosophical to care about politics"; that his mind was abstract, and his head always in the clouds. This is a complete myth. The four most ambitious men that I have ever known have been: Lord Rosebery, Lord Reading, Mr. Bonar Law, and Lord Balfour, and there was no moment in Balfour's political career when he was not ready to support with all his experience and ingenuity any Government of which he was a member.

Always a little bored by the reliable selfishness of the rich, and profoundly indifferent to the exigencies and enthusiasms of the poor, he was too intelligent to believe that this country could ever be permanently governed by either Socialists or Tories. His subtle mind preferred something in the nature of a compromise. Radicals of the type of Gladstone and Chamberlain did not appeal to him, and though theoretically his sense of proportion made him believe in the ultimate common sense of the British voter, in practice he knew nothing about him.

It was obvious to him that his adventurous accomplice was right when he said that the Tory Party was out of touch with the times, and that something must be done to attract the constituencies.

Lord Randolph Churchill's brilliant gifts, amazing industry and personal magnetism appealed to him, and his insolent frontal attacks were in strange contrast to Balfour's more fastidious Parliamentary methods. Beyond democratizing the Tory Party there was no particular issue on which they could stir the Government, and neither Balfour, Churchill, nor any of the Fourth Party could be described as standard-bearers.

There was no great cause that ever quickened Lord Balfour's political pulse: and questions of drink, wages, and housing, did not move him. He would have been more effectively employed had he been sent on a delicate

¹ I do not use the word "game" in a frivolous sense.

mission to disentangle some dangerous foreign problem, than leading an advanced guard to any social reform. But while watching with detachment a leader of lost causes, if the standard-bearer was uncertain of his goal, Lord Balfour was the man to point out with detachment and precision the line of least resistance.

Though a man of deep religious conviction I was never sure of what would rouse his moral indignation. No one knew right from wrong better than he did ; but having an elegant mind, and a fastidious aversion to trespassing in regions of which he knew nothing, he would listen with urbanity to the fallacies expressed by men of more nature and hardier temptations. His influence over his youthful admirers was not one to encourage either spiritual endeavour or moral indignation. His philosophy of life—so much discussed after his death—was “ Ride the ford as you find it,” and he would have agreed with Renan who said the strongest proof of the Infinite was the stupidity of man. He never censured stupidity, nor indeed anything else ; on the contrary—like first aid—he came to the rescue of those he fancied if they expressed themselves badly in argument, and though sometimes unfair in political debate, was scrupulously fair in all private discussion.

Criticizing him from a political point of view I think he left too much to chance, and subconsciously gambled in many of the most perplexing questions of his time. In his desire to keep his party together in the controversy over Free Trade, he led them to the landslide of 1906 ; and there were other situations in which a great commander could have retrieved his army from disaster. I do not think he was always aware of what his colleagues were thinking, and more from detachment than disloyalty, he left his supporters in the lurch. Opinions will always differ on the subject, but I have often wondered whether his conduct in the Wyndham Irish episode did him justice. George Wyndham was a young man of charm, beauty, and exceptional literary gifts, about whom too many

pages have been printed. He was Balfour's private secretary, and a brother of Lady Wemyss—a woman who had the first place in Lord Balfour's estimation. There was every reason—when he differed from the Government over their Irish policy—that his views should have received consideration. I dare say it was difficult, but he did not get the backing he deserved, and it was a sorrow to my husband and me to see the career of such a promising young man come to an end over a controversy in which he had evidently played an honourable part.¹ All that can be said in excuse was that both Wyndham and Balfour differed fundamentally over the question of coercion ; and whereas Wyndham was the Chief Secretary and living among the Irish people, Balfour was fighting with his back to the wall in the House of Commons every inch of the way to Home Rule.

When Lord Balfour's Biography is written it will probably show that he was at the height of his political power in dealing with the Irish question, as he showed such courage, patience and resource that he won the admiration, not only of his English supporters, but of his Irish opponents. He had a formidable array of Irish orators against him, and in Mr. Gladstone—the leader of the Opposition—he was faced by the most powerful speaker in the House. In courage, and subtlety, Gladstone and Balfour were well matched, and as I was present at most of the debates on Home Rule I was thrilled by the poignancy, power, and rapidity of the thrusts and cuts in those long and memorable encounters.

It is possible that had Lord Balfour always fought with his back to the wall he might have been a Napoleon—but the trouble was, that he perceived few walls, and his intellect was of the kind that saw with disconcerting indifference both sides of every question, which enabled him to argue with equal perfection whether he believed

¹ Since writing this I am told that I am wrong, and that the whole Cabinet was behind Lord Balfour in thinking that George Wyndham should resign.

in the subject of contention or not. These fastidious mental acrobatics made him a very formidable person ; but devoted as I was to him, I could not approve the method he adopted to defend what he himself preferred ; and though no *thinking* person would misunderstand him, the majority of mankind do not *think* ; and something of the chill of his method fell upon his readers.

In defending the right of others to have their own faith no one could have written with more eloquence and beauty, but he avoided the direct championship of his own belief. He appeared to have so poor an opinion of other people's minds that he was indifferent to their opinions. This was not from any lack of courtesy, as the only times I ever heard him discuss these questions he showed unforgettable patience and urbanity, but once he had smiled away the confidence of the pretentious presumption of those with whom he was arguing, he did not feel hopefully enough to convert them to agreement with him.

One evening he and I were walking before dinner in the woods at Whittingehame. We had spent a lovely day on the North Berwick links and were both in high spirits—I tried to make him talk about himself.

"I am not I hope elated by praise or depressed by blame, but I am uneasy when I am explained," he said.¹

I said that he had little cause for anxiety, as no one that I knew would ever be able to explain the complexity of his nature. Fearing that I was in the humour to try, he turned the conversation from himself on to my children. I reminded him of a remark that he had made at Whittingehame which had been repeated to me. Someone said, "It seems sad to me that Margot Tennant is going to marry Asquith ; I believe he is an atheist."²

¹ I am told he said this to other people, but I never heard him repeat himself.

² My husband was never an atheist. He knew and read his Bible, and always believed that we were put into this world with a purpose.

"I do not know what you mean!" was his reply; "Asquith is all that religion can do for us."

Before returning to the house I asked him if he really liked me: I said I thought he had a taste for me as a collector might have in clocks or stamps, but that neither I, nor any of us—with the exception of Mary Wemyss, Alice Salisbury and Etty Desborough—were necessary to him, and if we died he would not miss us: he had put emotion too far, and for too long a time out of his life for his heart to function. Amused and thoughtful, he evaded the first part of my question, and replied, "I wonder."

I put my arm through his as we walked back to the house and said it did not so much matter who liked me as my chief concern was who *I* liked, and of that neither he nor I could be in any doubt.

I have said nothing about his knowledge of science as I am not qualified to judge, but on a visit to his brother-in-law, Lord Rayleigh¹—who had invited us to meet members of the British Association—my husband told me that the great German Professor—Helmholtz—said that he had been more impressed by Lord Balfour's scientific knowledge and acumen than by any expert he had met.

In the realm of literature no one of cultivation would deny that he had one of the purest literary styles of any writer of his day. There are passages of immortal beauty in his occasional papers and all his published works upon philosophy. I do not know enough about philosophy to know if the profundity of Lord Balfour's reflections have added to its advancement, but he has set a shining example of clear thinking and fine writing. Clearly expressed thought shows superior energy of mind, and is as stimulating as loosely expressed thought is enervating, and in the whole of Lord Balfour's published works you will not find a trace of obscurity, affectation, or journalism.

I will end this paper by quoting from an address that he delivered at the Church Congress in Manchester

¹ The present Lord Rayleigh's father, who married Arthur Balfour's sister, Evelyn.

(October, 1888), which made a profound impression on me.

He called it "The Religion of Humanity." It was an attack upon Positivism, not with any special reference to the Comte system, but using the word in a wider sense.

Not Christianity, but Positivism, shrinks and pales in the light of increasing knowledge. For, while the Positive faith professes to base itself upon science, its emotions centre in humanity, and we are, therefore, treated to the singular spectacle of a religion in which each great advance in the doctrines which support it, dwarfs still further the dignity of the object for which it exists. For what is man, considered merely as a natural object among other natural objects? . . .

Man, so far as natural science by itself is able to teach us, is no longer the final cause of the universe, the heaven-descended heir of all the ages. . . . His very existence is an accident, his story a brief and discreditable episode in the life of one of the meanest of the planets. Of the combination of causes which first converted a piece, or pieces, of unorganized jelly into the living progenitors of humanity, science indeed, as yet, knows nothing. It is enough that from such beginnings, famine, disease, and mutual slaughter—fit nurses of the future lords of creation—have gradually evolved after infinite travail a race with conscience enough to know that it is vile, and intelligence enough to know that it is insignificant. We survey the past and see that its history is of blood and tears, of helpless blundering, of wild revolt, of stupid acquiescence, of empty aspirations. We sound the future, and learn that after a period, long compared with the individual life, but short indeed compared with the divisions of time open to our investigation, the energies of our system will decay, the glory of the sun will be dimmed, and the earth tideless and inert, will no longer tolerate the race which has for a moment disturbed its solitude. Man will go down into the pit, and all his thoughts will perish. . . .

My contention is that every such religion, and every such philosophy, so long as it insists on regarding man as merely a phenomenon among phenomena, a natural object among other natural objects, is condemned by science to failure as an effective stimulus to high endeavour. Love, pity, and endurance it may leave with us: and this is well. But it so dwarfs and impoverishes the ideal end of human effort, that though it may encourage us to die with dignity, it hardly permits us to live with hope.¹

¹ "The Religion of Humanity," pages 306-307, in "Essays and Addresses" (David Douglas, Edinburgh, 1893).

QUEEN ALEXANDRA

I have written in my Autobiography of my first meeting with Queen Alexandra and the dazzling effect she produced on me by her grace and beauty ; but I have said little of our friendship. The Psalmist says : " Put not your trust in Princes . . ." " They rock to and fro like a cradle. Who cries ' Hosanna ' to-day, cries ' Crucify Him ' to-morrow." This did not apply to Queen Alexandra : once you had won her affection, you could never lose it. She would have been considered a clever woman if conversing with her had not been difficult ; but though when she spoke, she had none of the doughy, toneless diction of the deaf, her hearing was deficient, and as she grew older, her incurable deafness separated her from general conversation. She was the greatest of all great ladies, but she never grew up, and remained stubborn, young, generous, and impulsive till the day she died. Her health, vitality, observation and sense of humour were inexhaustible ; but she had inflexible prejudices, and among the men she most disliked was the German Kaiser. Brought up in the simplicity of the Danish Court—where she told me she was taught to darn her stockings—she hated presumption ; and the rattling sabres, shining armour, and mailed fist of her husband's nephew were abhorrent to her, and she could never understand why her mother-in-law (Queen Victoria) liked him.

When my husband decided that their Majesties must pay an official visit to Berlin ¹ in 1909, it was with the greatest difficulty that Queen Alexandra was persuaded to accompany the King, and it was only after Lord Crewe and Sir Edward Grey joined the Prime Minister in his entreaty, that she gave way. My husband thought it all-important—considering the strained personal relations between the German and British Courts—that this

¹ King Edward and Queen Alexandra left London for Berlin on the 9th of February, 1909.

visit should be paid. The regrettable interview given by the Kaiser to the *Daily Telegraph*, without the approval of Prince von Bülow, had aggravated the mistrust that was felt for him—not only in England, but in France and in Russia. When the official visit was over, the King remained in Germany and the Queen returned to Buckingham Palace, where I went to see her.

Both the German and the English Press had expatiated on the enthusiastic welcome given to their Majesties in Berlin, and I told her what a tremendous success their visit had been, and how much the German people had admired her beauty.

"A plain race, my dear," she replied, and added : "Your wicked Henry made me go !"

I asked her how it was that her sister-in-law—the Empress Frederick—for whom she had so much respect, had not brought her son up with more wisdom and affection. She said she thought their temperaments were too different for them to understand one another, and that the Empress's love of her home and all English customs had not been sufficiently restrained to make her popular with either the Kaiser or the German people. I said that her husband had been a sort of hero after he had ridden in the procession at Queen Victoria's Jubilee—dressed like Lohengrin in white, with a silver helmet—and wondered why he had not influenced his heir. She said that though a noble character he was not a clever man.

I gathered from what she told me, that the love the Empress had for her brother—King Edward—had started and encouraged the jealousy that the Kaiser had always felt for him. Never having seen the Empress Frederick, I said it seemed strange to me that such a clever woman had had so little influence over her son, to which she said :

"She cuffed and kissed him almost at the same moment. He was a confident, boastful young fellow who disliked his superiors. He would not allow any

of us to go near the poor Queen in her last illness. My dear Margot, the nurse and I had to give him a strong, accidental push to move him off the bed, or I should never have been able to speak to her when she was dying."

Continuing upon the Berlin visit, I asked her who she had met that most interested her. She said that Prince von Bülow was cleverer, better dressed, had finer manners, and more width of mind and sense of humour than any of the men that surrounded the Court.

"We dined with him and his charming wife—an Italian lady with a lovely villa somewhere in Italy of which she had painted several water-colours. After dinner the Prince and I went into another room, and he showed me his wife's water-colours. I pointed to the best of them and said with a smile: 'A charming place of retreat, my dear Prince,'—at which he clicked his heels, bowed, and said:

" 'We must all look to our futures to-day, Your Majesty! ' "

I said I presumed he knew that his Kaiser was not going to forgive him for repudiating the vulgar *Daily Telegraph* interview, to which she agreed.

I asked her what she had discussed with the Kaiser at the many meals they had together. She said he ate so little that one day at dinner she said to him:

" 'You ride, and work, and worry, why don't you eat? Eating is good for the brain.' At this he looked affronted, and said, 'You find me stupid? ' "

I asked her what she had replied, and she described how she had made a little twist with her fingers in his face and said:

" 'Well, what about all this kidoodle over your navy! ' "

The Kaiser appeared to take this in good part, but she maintained that she gave him a box of meat lozenges recommended to her by Sir Francis Laking (her confidential doctor) to stimulate his appetite, and the lozenges had been inspected by the Kaiser and his doctor. "Stupid

man," she exclaimed, "he thought I wanted to poison him!"

I asked her how she knew this, and she said that her maid had seen them both standing on high chairs in the passage as she passed on her way to bed examining the lozenges under the glare of an electric light.

The sum up of our conversation was that their visit had been an unparalleled success and she was obliged to confess that the German people had greeted her with enthusiasm.

* * * * *

Unless you are brought up in the intimacy of Royal personages you cannot say you truly know, or love them; but my devotion for Queen Alexandra would have been the same if she had not been a queen, and when the King died I felt an overwhelming pity for her. Their reign had lasted such a short time, and during it, she and the King had come together in a mutual bond of triumphant popularity. I doubt if any king or queen in this country were more adored than Edward VII and his lovely wife.

After the King's death, Queen Alexandra was distressed at the idea of returning to Marlborough House, and it was with difficulty that she was persuaded to leave Buckingham Palace.

Knowing how devoted I was to her, she asked me to go and see her after the King's funeral. We sat side by side on a sofa in her room in the Palace and cried together. Finding little that I could say to console her, I wondered what topic would stop her tears and divert her attention, and looking round the room I saw a large photograph of the terrier Cæsar which the Duchess of Newcastle had given the King, and which had impressed the crowd when, led by a retainer on a string, it had followed the hearse in the funeral procession.

"Poor little dog," I said, "his devotion to your King, Ma'am, touched every spectator at the funeral."

"Horrid little dog!" she said. "He never went near my poor husband when he was ill!"

"But, Ma'am," I said, "the day you took my husband to see the King when he was dead, the dog was lying at his feet."

"For warmth, my dear," she replied.

Margot. "Do you mean to say all the fidelity and devotion we heard that the little dog had for his master was not true?"

The Queen. "*Daily Mail*, my dear—dogs don't like sick men."

Margot. "But did he never show any sign of affection?"

The Queen. "He put his two paws on the side of the coffin before they screwed the top down."

Margot. "Surely that was a sign of devotion!"

The Queen. "Curiosity, my dear."

After this there was nothing more to be said. I looked at her lovely youthful face and begged her never to become a professional widow, but to allow all of us to see her, adding, that Queen Victoria's cloistered retirement had seemed to me to be a profound mistake.

"Don't say anything against her, dear Margot; after all, poor thing, she lost what she loved, and was always kind to me in the early days of my marriage."

I asked her if the Queen had really cared for John Brown, to which she replied:

"He was a comfortable Scotsman who liked wrapping her cloak round her in their Highland drives."

We left each other smiling between our tears.

CHAPTER VII

A STUDY OF THE MARQUESS CURZON

I HAVE purposely not read Lord Ronaldshay's ¹ Biography of George Curzon ; because I knew George so intimately, and for so many years, that I want to write this short account uninfluenced by what every friend and critic tells me is a first-rate book.

I dare say it was easier for someone who had not known George—from the day he left Balliol to become a Member of Parliament till after the War—to write about him than it is for me. For though there was little that was complex, and nothing at all mysterious, there were such contradictions in his character that to make a convincing portrait, or even one true to likeness, is almost impossible ; and had Lord Balfour not begged me to do it, I would not attempt to write anything about Lord Curzon.

But he was a great public figure, and no private friendship should prevent one writing what might be of future political interest. I think the reason Arthur Balfour wanted me to write about George Curzon was because we knew him in early happy days, when he was ardent, young, dashing, and unspoilt ; and though he always remained ardent and dashing, after his resignation from India something had snapped in George's nature, and he disappointed us both in different ways.

I think Arthur would have had more respect for George if he had quarrelled with *him*, as he was clever enough to know that that would have been a hindrance in Curzon's career, but to quarrel with me, St. John

¹ The Earl of Zetland.

Brodrick,¹ and many of his oldest friends, he found difficult to understand, and, being of an aloof and amiable disposition, he detested personal quarrels. He never forgave himself for extending Curzon's first term as Viceroy of India, as if he had refused, there would have been no Kitchener quarrel, and Lord Curzon's reputation would have gone down to History with undiminished glory. He might have been looked upon as one of the greatest Viceroys ever sent from England to India.

But it was all-important that Curzon should keep in with his Chief, and though in some of his asides to me, I gathered that there was not much love lost between them, he and Lord Balfour remained upon easy terms.

In writing of Lord Curzon it is difficult to convince the world that a man can play a rôle that he imposed upon himself and yet be sincere ; or that he could be both generous and mean, pompous and humorous, affectionate and lonely, vulgar and distinguished, friendly and proud. These merits and defects in one man are doubtless possible, but they do not make a convincing whole, and in spite of his patriotic public service, courage, and sense of justice, he was so little known to the British people that they did not feel an overwhelming sense of loss when he died.

He came to Glen in 1884, the year before my sister Laura married Alfred Lyttelton, and after that, he made it his second home. Sweet-tempered, affectionate and gay, he was an enchanting companion, and I was never tired of listening to his eloquent and finished phrases upon his high expectations. In that, and the succeeding years, he had formidable intellectual rivals ; Harry Cust, George Wyndham, George Pembroke, Godfrey Webb, Lord Cowper, Arthur Balfour, Hugo Wemyss, Evan Charteris, and all those who were afterwards known as "The Souls" : nevertheless, George Curzon not only held his own, but was an addition to every party given at Glen, Gosford, Wilton, Panshanger, Ashridge,

¹ The Earl of Midleton.

and Whittingehame—the country houses where, after my sister Laura's death, we all forgathered.

He excelled in conversation, and in early days would often tell amusing stories about himself. He told me one day that Mrs. Percy Wyndham's German governess said to him :

"Please tell me, Mr. Curzon, what your English word 'bounder,' that I hear you sometimes called, means."

He replied : "It means, dear Fräulein, one who succeeds in life by leaps and bounds."

The first time I heard him address a public meeting was in Glasgow in 1896. He was speaking upon foreign affairs, a subject which always interested him more than British politics. He alluded to the Armenians as "partridges driven over the cold hills of Anatolia." I could see that his audience were not interested in either Armenia or Anatolia, and they started coughing.

Herr Schnabel, the great pianist, told me there were only two kinds of audience, those who coughed, and those who did not ; and it was obvious to me that George's oratory on this occasion was not appreciated.

Apart from his unruffled self-assurance, vital interest in objective matters, and devouring industry, he was never self-indulgent ; he did not eat, drink, or sleep too much, and had unrivalled courage and endurance. Although his father was a clergyman—of whom I know nothing—George was a religious man ; but as Plotinus says : "It is easier and commoner for good people to love God, than to love each other."

George was never physically robust, but when I first knew him he could travel, ride, get up early, sit up late, play tennis, and never appeared tired. He had very available health, and probably from a dominating will forced himself to do more than was wise ; he despised every form of fatigue. But I am told by Sir Walter Lawrence, who was with him when he was Viceroy, that he had suffered much more than anyone realized, which

would account for the irritability and lack of consideration which estranged him from so many of us after he came back from India. He combated his health and his doctors, and one of them told me that had he shown more moderation, or been more open to influence, he might have survived his final illness.

I know nothing of this, as in the last years of his life he did not speak to me : but in the thirty years of our friendship I never heard him complain, I never saw him daunted, and—except when the lovely Lady Grosvenor married George Wyndham—I never saw him depressed.

What I admired in George Curzon was his love of adventure, sense of humour, industry, and ambition ; what I resented was, there was nothing inevitable in his rudeness, and being a simple forth-right person myself, it seemed to me that his insolence was like play-acting. George loved society and was infinitely hospitable, he was also capable of affection and tenderness, and, as it adds nothing to your stature, I could never understand why he thought it grand to be rude to servants.

What I was slow to perceive was a self-engagement which grew upon him till it became a wire entanglement from which he could not escape. Absorption in his future and fortune obscured his knowledge of himself, and he rarely penetrated the enamel of his own complacency. With all his awareness, he was not always aware of what was passing in other people's minds ; and in spite of his hospitality and sense of humour, as he grew older he lost his gaiety, and "lacked the wise frivolity of greater men."¹

It is difficult to realize that the flawless front you present to yourself makes you obtuse ; and I have observed the unbecoming fate that awaits men and women who have never had this secret revealed to them.

Curzon had no interest in common folk, and appeared to cultivate a disregard not only for those who served

¹ I think this was a phrase of Clough's.

with, or under him, but for the bulk of mankind. There is always something wrong with men who cannot keep servants,¹ and George mistook arrogance for breeding.

It is not by your conduct but by your character that you will be ultimately judged, and though George Curzon developed his intelligence by journalism, travel, and politics, he was too fond of his career to develop his character.

To him the high road of life seemed straight and simple, and success came to him early; but there are many "concealed drives" which an ardent motorist would be well advised to look out for. There were no "concealed drives" for Curzon; and "dead slow" was unknown to him. He did not tell one all he thought, but there was nothing imposing in his reserves; he deceived himself by mistaking phrases for action; and as he grew older his words were a size too big for his thoughts. He seemed to think a dignified political protest, public letter, or private memorandum to the Cabinet was sufficient. He lost sight of the pursuit in the gesture, and rested on his oars long before the race was won.

Sir Walter Lawrence, who knew him more intimately than any man living, tells me that when Lord Curzon was Viceroy of India, he not only showed amazing administrative ability, but great constructive activity. But after he returned to England I only saw the gesture, and neither my husband nor I thought him a man of action. He could never have pursued Joseph Chamberlain and postponed Protection; never have put the Parliament Bill on the Statute Book; nor could he have made himself Minister of War in a night. Had he been the Prime Minister of the Conservative Party in 1914 I doubt if he could with all his oratory have brought a *United Empire* into the Great War. He could expound with eloquence, but not pursue with vigilance any con-

¹ Dr. Johnson says in "The Rambler": "The highest panegyric that private virtue can receive is the praise of servants."

vinced political policy ; and what he might have accomplished with the co-operation of men who shared his opinion was frustrated by his incapacity to work with men that he looked upon as his inferiors. Unless you are a man of real authority, pride robs you of support ; and you must be a Pitt, a Bismarck, or a Napoleon, if you are to achieve any great purpose by yourself.

George had many qualities but little quality, and was not made of the stuff that can be worn next to the skin. The ardour of his mind prevented it from being commonplace, but it was a prose mind. It might have been said of him what John Morley said of Macaulay's literary style : " You miss the mystery of the strings." His mind, his character, and his face had a certain resemblance. He had appearance without looks, and though he had an infectious laugh, his face was always in a somewhat wooden posture. His knowledge of literature—the fine sayings and great thoughts of poets, philosophers, and priests—was limited, and not sufficiently profound to move his conversation into unexpected places ; and though he infused life and humour into all he said, he did not inspire reflection.

I have read somewhere : " When you realize that there are two people within you, it is wiser to listen to the one that is vexed." Perhaps one of George's selves was never vexed ; but if it was, he could always be relied upon to console it. Life is too rapid for a " close time " in self-sufficiency.

His two beautiful wives were more accomplices than critics ; and while sustaining him by their love, did little for him by their advice. If George had allowed his affection, gaiety and native kindness to expand, and concentrated more upon his family and friends, he might have found the steady consolation which would have enabled him to withstand the buffets that sooner or later come to most public men : and in his latter years he was profoundly lonely.

An indefatigable worker, industrious author, and facile

speaker, he had all the qualities to make him famous ; but there is a difference between *fame* and *greatness* and he confounded the two.

I find an account in my diary, of a conversation which I had upon his talents.

" Dining with Lord Morley on the 18th November, 1914, we discussed George Curzon as a writer and orator. The company was our host and hostess, my husband, myself, Lord Rosebery, Mr. Birrell, and Lady Lyttelton (the wife of the late General Sir Neville Lyttelton). I challenged them all to say if they thought Curzon a great speaker or a fine writer. Lord Morley said that both his writing and his speaking were only superior journalism, and no one would read his books in the future. I said that he wrote upon dull subjects, as with the exception of Kinglake's ' Eothen ' few people read books on travel. At the end of dinner John Morley said to me :

" ' Believe me, Curzon will never lead the Lords ; he has not made himself popular. He said to me, in a conversation we had at Hackwood :¹ " I shall never be the Prime Minister of a Unionist Government." I did not contradict him, but speaking for myself, I think the Duke of Devonshire will lead the Lords.' "

What was original about George Curzon was his temperament ; his belief in himself, his love of ascendancy, and his extravagant delight in hospitality, ceremony, and display. He had a Disraelian delight in phrases, colour, conversation, and fine people,² but he was

¹ Hackwood, the country house where Lord Curzon lived.

² After I had written this, I read on page 249 of Sir Walter Lawrence's wonderful and moving book :—" The India We Served," what he writes of Lord Curzon and Lord Kitchener : " There was a likeness between these two remarkable men. They both lived for work, and cared nothing for the susceptibilities of others. Neither could tolerate inefficiency nor be lenient to failure. Lord Curzon was the greater student and could work longer than Lord Kitchener. Both were equally impatient of criticism or opposition. Both loved pageantry, loved beautiful surroundings, and took an almost feminine

never self-indulgent ; on the contrary, he exacted even more from himself than from the people he worked with ; and in spite of the responsibilities of high office went into details from the scullery to the skylight upon matters better left to secretaries or domestics. Because he was enterprising, affectionate, and successful, he was convinced that the public would take him at his own valuation : but he handicapped himself from the beginning by prancing into a world that was unprepared, and averse to so much self-assurance ; and a political world which—unlike to-day—had in it men of eminence in both Houses. Without comparing him to Gladstone, Chamberlain, Salisbury, Magee, or the Duke of Argyll, his speeches in both Houses were not as interesting as Parnell's, Randolph Churchill's, Healy's, or Hicks-Beach's. His fame—upon which he built an edifice, half real and half imaginary—penetrated abroad, but never very far in these islands.

I expect when I read Zetland's Biography I shall understand what it was that made George Curzon's tenure of the Foreign Office so ineffectual, but my husband and I thought something must have snapped in him to account for a man of his pride and intelligence putting up with the treatment he received at the hands of the Prime Minister (Mr. Lloyd George) in the Coalition of 1917. He allowed himself to be trodden upon and overlooked in the Cabinet after the War in a manner which no one who had known him in his youth would have believed possible. After this, his position was never the same, and in some ways I think it was fortunate that he was in the House of Lords, as I doubt if the Tory Party would ever have welcomed him as their Prime Minister.

With the exception of John Morley, John Addington Symonds, Jowett, Gilbert Murray, Evan Charteris, Lord

interest in the details of domestic arrangements. Both were determined and acquisitive collectors, and both had an extreme reverence for rank."

MORE MEMORIES

Midleton, Lord Kilbracken,¹ Lord Pembroke, and Lord Balfour, I never had a friend whose company gave me more pleasure than George Curzon's. On several occasions he and I made expeditions together to see cathedrals, pictures, and famous country houses. These he called his "honeys"—an unofficial name for a honeymoon—and they are engraved upon my memory as instancing his love of Glen, varied knowledge, lively enthusiasm and perfect companionship.

I have kept all the letters he wrote to me from the year 1884 till I published my Autobiography; but I shall not put them in this book as it would give a misleading impression. Neither he nor I were in love with each other, but we had in some ways a stronger bond—we loved one another; and when our intimacy broke, it shook my confidence in all human friendship.

The first quarrel George and I had was after he had insulted a footman on his previous visit to Glen. My father had telegraphed him to return for a shooting-party, and I went to meet him at the station of Innerleithen. As all the menservants at Glen had refused to valet George unless he apologized to Charles, I felt the situation was serious. We greeted one another with affection, and he jumped into the dog-cart eager and care-free. After crossing the Tweed, I pulled myself together, and with as much seriousness as I could command, opened the conversation.

Margot. "Tell me, George, why are you rude to servants?"

George. "What do you mean?"

Margot. "It's dreadful to be rude even to your own servants, but quite unpardonable to be rude to other people's. The last time you were at Glen you accused Charles the footman of stealing a sovereign—and then you found it under your own chocolate box. Do you remember this?"

George. "Yes, Margie darling; I remember."

¹ The late Lord Kilbracken.

Margot. "And you never apologized ! Really, George, you may be a genius, but you are a cad !"

To this he replied :

"I'm no genius, Marge ! But I'm full of middle-class method."

I tried to explain to him that a difference in class was one of opportunity and education, and that if he would cultivate imaginative insight, or even more observation, he would find as much fundamental vulgarity in people of birth as he would in the middle and poorer classes. I told him what Lincoln said when he overheard a woman in the crowd exclaim :

"Why ? what a common-looking fellow !"

Lincoln's retort was : "God likes common-looking fellows or He would not have made so many of them."¹

George was interested, but inattentive, and seeing that he was in high spirits I dropped the subject ; but before we reached Glen he promised me that the footman Charles would receive an adequate apology.

The next step in our friendship was when I made the acquaintance of Mary Leiter. I received a long telegram from some distant land from George, asking me to go to Thomas's Hotel and visit a Mrs. Leiter and her three daughters, and introduce Mary—the eldest—to the Duchess of Devonshire, Lady Londonderry, Lady Cadogan, and the wives of all the Cabinet Ministers, many of whom I did not know.

I drove round to Berkeley Square in my phaeton on a hot day at the height of the London season. Mrs. Leiter had had a telegram from George informing her of my visit, and I was greeted with enthusiasm. Mary approached me with a cooing voice and radiant smile. She wore a black lace dress with a geranium velvet waist-band, and a bow of the same colour was stuck close to her ear under a large black hat. In those days there were few pinched waists and no bustles, but the dresses

¹ George reminded me of this Lincoln story years after I had told it to him.

were long, the sleeves puffed, and the waist-line where nature has placed it. Tall and stately, Mary Leiter presented a vision of beauty. Added to the grace of her figure and movements, the oval of her face was almost as perfect as Queen Alexandra's. Her hair was dark, her eyes were violet, and the slow radiance of her smile gave a deceptive impression.

As the Duchess of Devonshire was giving a great ball the next night, I drove Mary Leiter to Devonshire House, hoping that the Duchess would be so impressed by her beauty that she might invite her to her ball.

Louise Devonshire was a woman whose social ascendancy eclipsed that of anyone that I have ever seen or heard of in London society. A German by birth, married in the first instance to the Duke of Manchester—a man of mediocre merit—she had distinguished children, an intimate knowledge of men and affairs, amazing courage, a perfect profile, and unrivalled personality. She was intimate with every King, Courtier, Commoner, and Prime Minister, and there was no one in London who did not covet her invitations.

After my sister Laura died—in 1886—the Duchess of Manchester—as she then was (she did not marry the Duke of Devonshire till 1892)—had taken a fancy to me, and proposed herself to dinner one night when my father, mother, myself, and Sir Alfred Lyall were dining alone. I felt full of apprehension lest so famous a lady might be bored in the company of three strangers; but though never very talkative, her pleasure in my father's pictures, her sweetness to my mother, and her interest in Sir Alfred's rare and remarkable conversation made the evening a success, and I felt that I had made a lasting friendship.

The Duchess received Mary Leiter and myself in her boudoir, and asked her to her ball. Dressed by Worth, in a white satin Princess dress trimmed at the foot of the skirt with a ruche of white ostrich feathers, Mary walked up the marble staircase. Her appearance caused a

profound sensation, and from that moment she was the ornament of every London ballroom. She was entertained and admired by all my friends and we constantly met at Panshanger, Taplow, Whittingehame, Wilton, Gosford, and Glen. As she was not interested in flowers, my mother was indifferent to her, and when she sang snatches of French songs in a piping soprano along the Glen passages, my father shouted "Stop that!" and got up from the writing-table to slam the door. My sister—Chartie Ribblesdale—took a great fancy to Mary. She thought she might marry Alfred Lyttelton; but after being alone with Mary for two weeks I wrote to Chartie and told her they were quite unsuited, and that I was averse to the idea. (In spite of the lure that places in Scotland have for American men I have seldom met an American woman¹ who could stay for any length of time in the country, or that was not ultimately moor-proof.)

Mary and Alfred were not conscious of these speculations; but none of us need have worried about moors, Marys, or marriages, as the moment George Curzon returned from his travels he married the beautiful Mary Leiter. Their marriage did nothing to interrupt our friendship, if anything it cemented it; and when they returned from India—which George left in 1905 after quarrelling with Kitchener—I saw him constantly. Upon his arrival in London, George came to see me. He ran into my boudoir in Cavendish Square, and before I had time to greet him, said:

"Beloved Marge! are you a St. Johnite,² or a Georgite?"

He was amazed when I told him that not only was I on the side of Lord Midleton—then Secretary of State for India—but that the bulk of his friends shared my opinion. It was not fair to blame St. John for a decision over the Kitchener controversy which the Prime Minister

¹ "O who will o'er the downs so free" is a song that would never have been dedicated to an American woman.

² The Earl of Midleton.

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(Arthur Balfour) had taken, and which had met with no opposition in either the Cabinet or the Press. I besought him with all the eloquence I could command not to quarrel with his oldest friend, and a man whom we all loved.

* * * * *

Here, I would like to write a few words upon my oldest and dearest friend, Lord Midleton.

He drove over to Glen¹ from Lord and Lady Reay's when I was very young, and we have cared for and corresponded with one another ever since. No one who does not know Lord Midleton can have any idea of his rare nature and beautiful character. His Conservative colleagues never valued him as highly as he deserved; and my husband—at the time of the first War Coalition—said he would far rather have had St. John Brodrick in his Cabinet than most of the Tories that were imposed upon him.

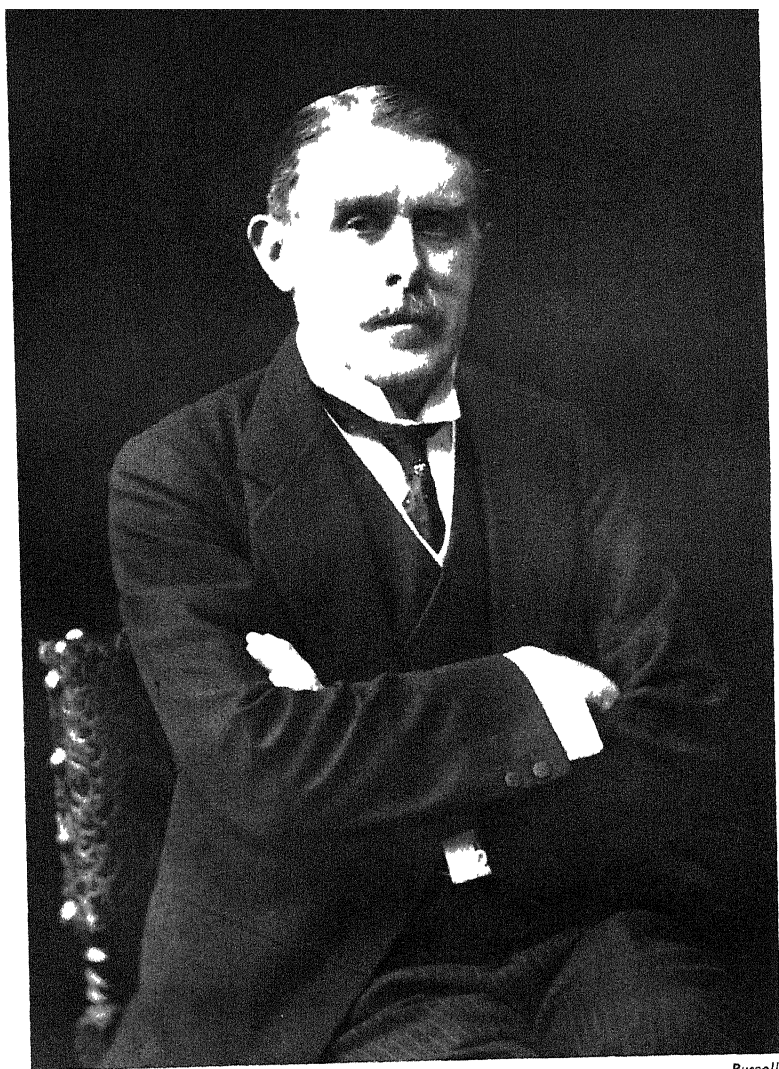
Lord Midleton is one of the few men that I have known who was damaged by the Press; and I am not surprised, as he has all the qualities that would make him unpopular with newspapers. Though an efficient speaker, he is not histrionic, and his dislike of intrigue does not make good copy for Press back-chat. He is often tactless, but only very stupid people would be offended by his criticisms, and speaking for myself I don't agree with Napoleon who said: "*Ce n'est que la vérité qui blesse.*" I am quite able to bear the truth, and the same may be said of my friend St. John Midleton.

His selfless patriotism over the Irish settlement, and his conduct in his final quarrel with George Curzon showed a generosity of nature which is rare to meet.

* * * * *

To return to Lord Curzon, I moved Heaven and earth to prevent George from severing a friendship which had

¹ Lord Midleton's impressions of this visit are in the Chapter about myself (p. 274).



Russell

In memory of 52 years
unbroken friendship
from Middleton

lasted from their Eton and Oxford days until the Kitchener controversy in India ; but my efforts met with no success, and I saw by the bitterness with which he spoke of St. John on his visits to Cavendish Square that nothing I could say was likely to make the faintest impression upon him.

It is not my intention to go into the rights and wrongs of his quarrel with Kitchener, but in connexion with this, I will relate an anecdote which General Sir Ian Hamilton told me of the last dinner in India at which the Viceroy met Lord Kitchener upon friendly terms.¹

In March, 1905, Sir Ian had reached Rangoon on his way to England from the Manchurian war, where he had served as Military Attaché with the Japanese Army. There he received a cable from Lord Kitchener telling him to leave his P. and O. boat, and get into a new British-India turbine steamer (on her trial trip) which would bring him to Calcutta to see the Viceroy, who wished to hear what he had to say upon the Manchurian situation. Sir Ian transferred himself, and was conveyed to Calcutta where he stayed with Lord Kitchener in Fort William. In the evening of his arrival, they drove to Government House to dine with the Viceroy. The party consisted of himself, the Viceroy, his Military Secretary—Everard Baring—and Lord Kitchener.

They waited for a long time, and when at last George Curzon arrived, it was obvious that he was in the worst of humours. Pale, limping and over-tired, he was arrogant and abrupt. He bemoaned his fate at having to travel that night to Lucknow, where he had to deliver an important speech not a word of which he had had time to prepare.

The dinner threatened to be a complete fiasco ; but after his Excellency had had several glasses of champagne, he turned to Sir Ian, and bombarded him with questions of the most searching kind, showing an interest in machine-guns, wire entanglements, trench mortars,

¹ I write this in Sir Ian's own words.

and other war developments in Manchuria that was not shared by the Commander-in-Chief.

Lord Kitchener was obviously preoccupied and bored, and when the party broke up and they drove back to Fort William, he said to Sir Ian :

“ You must have talked yourself hoarse to-night ! —machine-guns aren’t in it when you let yourself go ! —but you saved the situation.”

“ What do you mean ? ” asked Sir Ian.

“ When the Council broke up this morning,” Kitchener replied, “ H.E. asked me to stay, and I did so. He tackled me on my having said that if I did not get my way over the Hon. Member in the Military Department—and the curtailment of his powers—I would resign. He said it was grossly disloyal to him ; and that he had sent my views and his own, to the Secretary of State¹ in England, by whose decision we were bound to abide. He added, ‘ It is not fair to throw in your resignation to weigh the scales against me.’ ”

To this Lord Kitchener replied :

“ Your Excellency can easily redress the balance of the scales if you so desire.”

“ How ? ” inquired the Viceroy.

“ By throwing your own resignation into the other scale.”

“ After this, my dear General,” said Lord Kitchener, “ you can imagine I did not look forward to this dinner.”

In return for this story—which reflects great credit upon Lord Kitchener—I told Sir Ian that before George had made his first journey to Afghanistan—where he went as correspondent to *The Times*—he was living in St. Ermin’s Chambers and asked me to go with him to Covent Garden to buy decorations. He said that as his visit involved great diplomatic dangers it was necessary and desirable that his appearance should impress the Amir. I told him that one of the distinguishing gifts of Royal persons is their astonishing memory and obser-

¹ The Earl of Middleton.

vation, and that if the Amir discovered that George had been decorated in Drury Lane it might land him in trouble. He waved my warnings aside, and we went together to a glittering shop with a window full of stars, swords, daggers, wigs, ribbons and robes. George selected the medals he thought most likely to impress the Oriental mind; and after returning to Grosvenor Square—where he had sent his coat—my maid sewed on all his newly acquired decorations.

From what I heard afterwards, George was justified, and his visit to the Amir Abdur Rahman of Afghanistan was a notable success.¹

He and I corresponded with one another and maintained our friendship with unabated affection till May in the London season of 1914, when George and I had our first serious dispute.

He gave a great ball to which the King and Queen and all our friends had been invited, and I thought it would be an appropriate occasion for my daughter Elizabeth—who had returned from her studies in Munich—to make her debut in the social world. George told me he thought her the cleverest girl he had ever met, and there had never been an entertainment in his house to which he had not invited me and my husband.

In May, 1914, there was no shadow of war, except the amateur preparations of the Carson Army over Home Rule in Ireland, a controversy which was raging at the time. But as George had always applauded the influence of "The Souls"—which had enabled men of all political parties to meet in the same house—I did not anticipate that this controversy would interfere with George's friendship for the Prime Minister and myself. He came to 10, Downing Street whenever he liked, and there had

¹ Lord Curzon's visit to the old Amir Abdur Rahman was a success, but subsequently when he became Viceroy, his treatment of the Afghans—a proud and courageous race—showed little understanding, and led to a great deal of friction, as well as to the refusal of the late Amir to visit India during Lord Curzon's term of office.

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never been a moment of friction between us. I recalled a letter which he had written to me the previous year, which had enclosed an account of what had taken place at Balliol when George had unveiled a portrait of my husband which had been presented to the College.

To his regret my husband had been unable to attend this ceremony and had written George the following letter :

10, DOWNING STREET.

5th June, 1913.

MY DEAR CURZON,

I am commanded by the King to attend the luncheon at Buckingham Palace on the 7th which he is giving to the Peace Delegates.

I need not assure you how much I regret—the more so as the date was changed to suit my engagements—that I am thus disabled from being present at the function at Balliol on that afternoon.

I had been looking forward to the opportunity of meeting many old friends of my Oxford days, expressing my grateful sense of the high honour which they and other members of Balliol are doing me in placing my portrait on the walls of the college.

“Floreat Domus de Balliolo.”

Yours always sincerely,

H. H. ASQUITH.

In George's speech he said :

“I dare say it would strike a foreigner as a strange thing that among the most ardent supporters should have been gentlemen strongly opposed to Mr. Asquith in politics, and that the individual chosen to make this presentation should, to put it mildly, not be consumed with undeviating admiration for his proceedings. But it is our way in this country : it does not strike us as strange at all. We do not carry our political differences to the point of obliterating personal friendship, or public esteem. God forbid that such a day should ever come.”

I also recalled a letter he had written to me in 1911 :

DEAREST MARGIE,

I was delighted with your witty and inimitable letter, like a breath blowing from the beautiful gardens of the past. Of course

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the younger generation is not *in* it with ours. They have not the beauty, or the spirit, or the adventurous ardour. I go much less into society than you, and I never make a new friend. How good it was to read that your precious, and gifted Elizabeth was coming back all right from her brief but perilous excursion in the dim valley.¹ There is a good deal of latent bitterness in politics—is it so surprising!—but neither the angels in Heaven above, nor the demons down under the sea—shall ever dis sever my soul from the soul of the Marge of my youth—

Yours affectionately,
GEORGE.

With this correspondence in my mind I was dumb-founded (in May, 1914) when Mrs. George Keppel came to Downing Street and told me that George was so infuriated at the turn of political events—for which I had no more responsibility than his valet—that he was going all over London telling everyone that he would not have us inside his house, and advising them to eschew our company. As he had invited my stepson—Herbert Asquith—his wife, and the Crewes, showing that his ball was not a purely political entertainment, I refused to believe her. But no invitation arrived, and I observed when I went to my seat in the Speaker's Gallery a general withdrawal of skirts, and looks of icy vagueness on the faces of the Ulster and other ladies of my acquaintance.

George's political leader—Arthur Balfour—strongly disapproved of this social boycott, and asked us to his dance and dinners; but one or two of my female Tory friends invited Elizabeth² to their houses without me. This made me profoundly unhappy, as she had been so long away from me in her Munich education that I had looked forward to taking her into her first season and introducing her to all my friends. It would have been a joy to me to have watched her eager little face at balls and parties.

One night, Elizabeth was going to a ball without

¹ A propos of Elizabeth nearly dying of double pneumonia in Lauterbrunnen.

² My daughter, Princess Bibesco.

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me. My husband was dining in the House of Commons, and I made Elizabeth rest after an early dinner alone with her. She came to say good night to me, radiant in her new ball dress. I could hardly restrain my tears, but occupied myself by examining her dress in the hope that she would not notice my face, but when she had left the room I flung myself upon my bed and burst into tears. The door opened and Elizabeth came in sobbing ; she said nothing would induce her to go to the ball. I calmed her, and said that I would not have gone even if I had been invited (a white lie !) as I had letters to write, etc., and after drying her eyes, and rearranging her dress, I accompanied her downstairs where a friend was waiting to take her to the ball.

I left a note upon her pillow to say that her consideration and love had made me completely happy, and crept into the night-nursery to say my prayers by my little son's bed uninterrupted by the snores of the nurse.

After the Curzon ball had taken place I wrote to George a kindly but protesting letter. I said that I never listened to gossip, but that mutual friends had told me that he wished London Society to ostracize me. I reminded him that he had been to 10, Downing Street for all our entertainments, and dined there to meet the King and Queen when political feeling was running high over the Parliament Bill. Was I to believe that he refused to have the Prime Minister and myself inside his house ? This is his reply :

1, CARLTON HOUSE TERRACE.

May 17th, 1914.

DEAREST MARGE,

You need never fear that I lose or waver in my personal attachment to you or to Henry, and if you knew the enormous personal trouble and correspondence which I undertook about his portrait for Balliol and the engravings of it, I think you would be the last to accuse me of allowing outside events to interfere with personal affection.

But you must be living in a world of your own if you do not realize that at a time when political feelings are highly strung it

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would be impolitic to invite, even to a social gathering, the wife and daughter of the head of a Government to whom the vast majority of my guests were inflexibly opposed, and that the meeting might have provoked a scene which would have been much more painful to me, and to you, than your absence could be to either or both of us.

It is no good not to recognize these facts, or to be deeply hurt by them. Rather should you feel pride that in spite of them, the deep personal affection of your old friends, like myself, has never wavered ; and look forward to the day when circumstances will allow of its exterior manifestations being resumed.

Your affectionate
GEORGE.

On receiving this, I wrote George the following letter :

10, DOWNING STREET,
WHITEHALL, S.W.
19th May, 1914.

DEAREST GEORGE,

You say in your letter that Elizabeth's and my appearance at your ball might have provoked a scene which would have been much more painful, etc., and farther on : "it is no good not to recognize these facts or to be deeply hurt by them."

I can't recognize what I have *never* seen—and what—unless you invite the Suffragettes—I shall never I think see, a painful scene provoked by Elizabeth and myself going into a room of any sort—whether ballroom, or "smoke room"—(as the *Nation* calls it !).

I could not "be deeply hurt" "by the facts" you say I ought to see clearly ; I should be unreservedly amused. I am only hurt when my "unwavering old friends"—to whom you say I should be grateful for their "deep personal affection"—desert me at a time when according to you, my appearance would create a scene. What is the use of unwavering old friends if they do not back one ? I don't want obituary notices. I am *sure* you have been most dear and kind about Henry's Balliol picture, dear, dear George.

I shall look forward to the day when I shall again be received by my "devoted old friends" : and when darling Elizabeth won't be looked upon as a bomb.

Your affectionate
MARGE.

This letter gives little indication of my profound unhappiness, for if friends of thirty years' standing were going to desert me, where was I to find them ?—I never wanted to be away from my husband in London or any-

where else, and could not bear to be separated from Elizabeth. Parting from her in Munich had made me miserable, and I had passionately looked forward to sharing a perfect family life with her, my husband and my little son—at a time when Downing Street was the centre of all that was famous, anxious, and exciting. But the root of my sorrow lay deeper than this.

There are some people with whom you have been associated for years and years. They have been introduced into your life by the accident of youth, and the rhythm of custom has established them in your heart : something happens—your eyelids lift, and you are terrified by the certainty that you have never known them. You may be kept temporarily together by games, plans, occupations, and all that is external, but you are strangers—separated, as by “the unplumbed, salt, estranging sea.”

* * * * *

With the advent of war all my reflections were numbed. My husband's sons were fighting, my brother's sons were fighting, my friends' and lovers' sons were fighting . . . at such a moment who could think of themselves? . . .

Nevertheless, I was surprised when Henry and I received an invitation from George to go to Hackwood and meet the Queen of the Belgians, who had brought her children to escape the War, and place them under the care of her friend George Curzon.

In spite of an inner conviction that—as war had obliterated all pettiness and personal feeling—I ought to go to Hackwood, Curzon's conduct had caused me so much disappointment that I told my husband I would rather refuse the invitation and let him go alone. I said that I was George's oldest and most intimate woman friend, and that he had not only estranged me, but had done his utmost to make society ostracize both of us. At this Henry laughed, and said that George was more important to himself than to anyone else, and that though

he enjoyed his company he had never valued his opinion and that I was a goose ever to take him seriously. When he added to this, that he would like me to go with him, I consented. So we went to Hackwood.

I hoped that our host would take the first opportunity of saying how much he regretted his unfriendly conduct ; but I was wrong. He greeted me as if there had never been a cloud between us, and I realized how much wiser my husband had been than I, when he said it was impossible to take George Curzon seriously.

Our fellow-guests were the Queen of the Belgians, her lady-in-waiting—Mme. Caramen Chimez—Lord and Lady Lansdowne, Mr. Bonar Law, and Mrs. Paul Rubens.

I quote from my Diary.

“ We all met in the garden on our arrival at Hackwood. Neither the Queen nor Mr. Bonar Law was there. Everyone was full of excitement to hear about the first great joint Party meeting which had been held that morning in the Guildhall ; and I could see that George longed to have been invited : (had he been less unkind, I would have sent him a ticket.) I described how striking it had been to see Arthur Balfour, Bonar Law, Austen Chamberlain, and all our Liberals on the same platform ; and everyone moved to the core by this haunting, terrifying war. The crowded masses of quiet men standing in hushed silence while Henry was making his speech ; and how at the end of it the enthusiasm was so thrilling, and prolonged, that many of the audience were in tears.

“ George listened to my description with the eagerness of a schoolboy, and went off to find the Queen to whom he wished us to be presented.

“ I could see that the War, and all that it meant to the Belgians, had had a profound effect upon the Queen. She appeared numbed, sensible, whispering and refined ; but soon got on to excellent terms with Henry. The Royal children joined us in the garden. The two little

Princes—very décolleté at the neck—wore blue shorts, and their naked legs were encased in high leather laced boots. Their fawn-coloured jumpers had sailor collars, and on their heads were placed small black Tam o' Shanters. The little Princess was gay and unconcerned, and they were all perfectly happy playing with George's lovely trio—Irene, Cimmy, and Sandra.

"The dinner-table had been carefully arranged; as our host has the exactitude of a calendar, and leaves nothing to chance. The Queen of the Belgians sat between George and Lord Lansdowne, Henry the other side of George, and I was placed between Lord Lansdowne and Mr. Bonar Law."

* * * * *

As I shall have no reason to write anything more about these two very different men, I take this opportunity of saying that my husband had a true affection for Lord Lansdowne and his wife, which was, I think, reciprocated.¹

Under a courteous, rather formal manner and a certain conventionality of outlook, Lord Lansdowne had rare qualities. Loyal, untouchy, and conscientious, he led the House of Lords with quiet distinction, and never made a bad speech. He disliked publicity, disapproved of the Press, and did little to make himself known to the public. When he joined the Coalition of 1915 he told me that he viewed with alarm the Cabinet secrets and other private political matters being published in certain newspapers. I suggested he should bring the subject before the Cabinet, at which he said, "It would be unwise to quarrel with *The Times*." With a little less modesty, or perhaps more red blood, I think Lord Lansdowne might have tackled this question, but everyone

¹ Lord Lansdowne told me (after we left Downing Street), that he would always regret not having known my husband earlier in life, as his views would have been influenced upon Ireland, about which he had not always approved of Carson's methods.

was too engrossed in the horrors of war to take any notice of newspapers.

Lord Lansdowne and I shared a common devotion to the Master of Balliol and often discussed Jowett's unrivalled influence, originality, and steady affection.

"Had it not been for him," he said, "I would have done little with my life."

If for no other reason, Lord Lansdowne's name will live in history for the courage and common sense he showed when he published his famous letter (in the *Daily Telegraph*, November 30, 1917), and had my husband been in Downing Street instead of Mr. Lloyd George, it would have received our profound consideration.

Among the many false fables believed by foolish people about my husband, was that he was not only slack in the prosecution of the War, but wished to make overtures to the Germans for peace; whereas it was while the Germans thought he was still in Downing Street that they confessed themselves beaten, and made their first Peace proposals. Sir John Cowans—one of the many clever and devoted soldiers that Mr. Lloyd George wanted to get rid of—telephoned this great news to us while we were at Walmer Castle—whence we never returned to Downing Street. Unfortunately for the whole world it was only by spreading that we were defeatists, beating gongs and keeping the War going that our opponents could have formed a Government. It was obvious to every thinking man that the Allies would not get to Berlin, or the Germans to Paris, and that all that could happen, was to heap up corpses for a delayed Conference. Had my husband been Prime Minister he would never have accepted the first German Peace proposal, but he would have kept the door open: and it is safe to say the War would not have lasted so long. But war means power, money, and prestige: with pressmen and non-combatants—living in security—it becomes a habit; and I watched it gradually corrupting the minds of men and women till the War was waged

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with pursuant ferocity even against innocent people at home.

Sensible friends of my own saw a spy in every bush, and our asylums were filled with ruined and distracted citizens of German origin whose sons were fighting at the Front. There was everything to gain by the shout of "a Fight to a Finish," and the new Coalition prided themselves upon extraordinary energy and superior patriotism. Had there been one man in the Government with the vision, wisdom, or statecraft to realize what the "Fight to a Finish" would ultimately mean, this country would have been spared the humiliation of the Treaty of Versailles—a document for which every signatory has reason to blush to-day.

A war that is lost by the enemy in the reign of one Government is easily won in the reign of its successor, and we have lived to realize the tragic price that was paid for "the Versailles Peace."

As Lord Lansdowne's letter was the first noble contribution to Peace, I reprint it with a few abbreviations.

FROM THE MARQUESS OF LANSDOWNE

THE EDITOR,

The *Daily Telegraph*, November 30, 1917.

We are now in the fourth year of the most dreadful war the world has known ; a war in which, as Sir W. Robertson has lately informed us, "the killed alone can be counted by the million, while the total of men engaged amounts to nearly 24 millions." Ministers continue to tell us that they scan the horizon in vain for the prospect of a lasting peace. And without a lasting peace we all feel that the task we have set ourselves will remain unaccomplished. . . .

The obstacles are indeed formidable. We are constantly reminded of one of them. It is pointed out that, while we have not hesitated to put forward a general description of other war aims, the enemy have, though repeatedly challenged, refused to formulate theirs, and have limited themselves to vague and apparently insincere professions of readiness to negotiate with us.

The force of the argument cannot be gainsaid, but it is directed mainly to show that we are still far from agreement as to the territorial questions which must come up for settlement in connexion with the terms of peace. These are, however, by no means the

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only questions which will arise, and it is worth while to consider whether there are not others, also of first-rate importance, with regard to which the prospects are less remote.

Let me examine one or two of these. What are we fighting for? To beat the Germans? Certainly. But that is not an end in itself. We want to inflict a signal defeat upon the Central Powers, not out of vindictiveness, but in the hope of saving the world from the recurrence of the calamity which has befallen this generation.

What, then, is it we want when the War is over? I know of no better formula than that more than once made use of, with universal approval by Mr. Asquith in the speeches which he has from time to time delivered. He has repeatedly told his hearers that we are waging war in order to obtain reparations, and security. Both are essential, but of the two, security is, perhaps, the more indispensable. . . . To end the War honourably would be a great achievement; to prevent the same curse falling upon our children would be a greater achievement still.

This is our avowed aim, and the magnitude of the issue cannot be exaggerated. For, just as this war has been more dreadful than any war in history, so, we may be sure, would the next war be even more dreadful than this. . . . Many of us, however, believe that it should be possible to secure posterity against the repetition of such an outrage as that of 1914. If the Powers will, under a solemn pact, bind themselves to submit future disputes to arbitration; if they will undertake to outlaw, politically and economically, any one of their number which refuses to enter into such a pact, or to use their joint military and naval forces for the purpose of coercing a Power which breaks away from the rest, they will, indeed, have travelled far along the road which leads to security. . . .

In his speech at the banquet of the League to Enforce Peace, on May 28, 1916, President Wilson spoke strongly in favour of "A universal Association of nations . . . to prevent any war from being begun either contrary to treaty covenants, or without warning and full submission of the cause to the opinion of the world."

Later in the same year, the German Chancellor at the sitting of the Main Committee of the Reichstag, used the following language :

"When, as after the termination of the War, the world will fully recognize its horrible devastation of blood and treasure, then through all mankind will go the cry for peaceful agreements and understandings, which will prevent, so far as is humanly possible, the return of such an immense catastrophe. Germany will honourably co-operate in investigating every attempt to find a practical solution and collaborate towards its possible realization."

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The Papal Note communicated to the Powers, on August last, places in the front rank :

"The establishment of arbitration on lines to be concerted and with sanction to be settled against any State that refuses either to submit international disputes to arbitration or to accept its awards."

This suggestion was immediately welcomed by the Austrian Government, which declared that it was conscious of the importance for the promotion of peace of the method proposed by His Holiness, . . . and that it was prepared to enter into negotiations regarding this proposal. Similar language was used by Count Czernin, the Austro-Hungarian foreign minister, in his declaration on foreign policy made at Budapest in October.

In his dispatch covering the Allied Note of January 10, 1917, Mr. Balfour mentions as one of the three conditions essential to a durable peace the condition that :

"Behind international law and behind all treaty arrangements for preventing or limiting hostilities some form of international sanction might be devised which would give pause to the hardest aggressor."

There remains the question of territorial claims. The most authoritative statement of these is to be found in the Allies' Note of January 10, 1917. This statement must obviously be regarded as a broad outline of the desiderata of the Allies, but is anyone prepared to argue that the sketch is complete, or that it may not become necessary to re-examine it?

Mr. Asquith speaking at Liverpool in October last, used the following language :

"No one pretends that it would be right or opportune for either side to formulate an ultimatum, detailed, exhaustive, precise, with clauses and sub-clauses, which is to be accepted verbatim and literatim, chapter and verse, as the indispensable preliminary and condition of peace.

"There are many things," he added, "in a world-wide conflict such as this, which of necessity must be left over for discussion and negotiation, for accommodation and adjustment, at a later stage."

It is surely important that this wise counsel should be kept in mind. Some of our original desiderata have probably become unattainable. Others would probably be given now a less prominent place than when they were first put forward. Others again, notably the reparation due to Belgium, remain, and must always remain in the front rank, but when it comes to the wholesale rearrangement of the map of South-Eastern Europe we may well ask for a suspension of judgment and for the elucidation which a frank exchange of views between the Allied Powers can alone afford. . . .

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In my belief, if the War is to be brought to a close in time to avert a world-wide catastrophe it will be brought to a close because on both sides, the peoples of the countries involved, realized that it has already lasted too long.

There can be no question that this feeling prevails extensively in Germany, Austria, and Turkey. . . .

An immense stimulus would probably be given to the peace party in Germany if it were understood :

- (1) That we do not desire the annihilation of Germany as a great power ;
- (2) That we do not seek to impose upon her people any form of government other than that of their own choice ;
- (3) That, except as a legitimate war measure, we have no desire to deny to Germany her place among the great commercial communities of the world ;
- (4) That we are prepared, when the War is over, to examine in concert with other Powers the group of international problems, some of them of recent origin, which are connected with the question of " the freedom of the seas " ;
- (5) That we are prepared to enter into an international pact under which ample opportunities would be afforded for the settlement of international disputes by peaceful means.

If it be once established that there are no insurmountable difficulties in the way of agreement on these points, the political horizon might, perhaps, be scanned with better hope by those who pray, but can at this moment hardly venture to expect, that the New Year may bring us a lasting and honourable peace.

LANSDOWNE.¹

¹ This is what is printed in the " Annual Register, 1917 " :

" A great sensation was caused at the end of November by the publication in the *Daily Telegraph* of a letter from Lord Lansdowne advocating a negotiated peace. There was some speculation as to whether the letter represented in any way the views of the Government or of the Unionist leaders, and it was even rumoured that Lord Lansdowne had been in touch with Mr. Asquith on the subject. But two days later a semi-official *communiqué* stated that Lord Lansdowne had not been in communication with any member of the Government, and that the views in the letter did not in any way represent the views of His Majesty's Government. Mr. Asquith, speaking at Birmingham in the second week of December, said that he had no more knowledge than any member of the Government of Lord Lansdowne's letter until he saw it in the Press, and he had no responsibility, direct or indirect, for its terms. But some of its critics, he declared, had read into it meanings and intentions

Lord Lansdowne's letter met with a storm of denunciation. Every donkey in England became daily more indignant and patriotic at the idea of anyone of British birth wishing to curtail the War. I listened with anguish to the high-flown and foolish remarks that were made by non-combatants: "Well-intentioned perhaps—but what a moment to choose!——" I timidly questioned whether the right moment¹ for humanity and common sense to intervene in a war of attrition was when we were losing, or when we were winning?—— The only answer was that the enemy at all costs must be crushed or our soldiers would have died in vain. I always observe that soldiers die in vain unless they die in heaps, and from what I heard afterwards, Lansdowne's letter gave our poor soldiers their first glimmer of hope.

No one seemed to know that after the combined manœuvres of General Nivelle and Mr. Lloyd George in April, 1917, over a hundred thousand French soldiers had mutinied, and the brunt of the following fighting was falling entirely upon British troops; nor would this knowledge have altered the opinion of the opponents of Peace. The War, with its immense private commercial interests and public waste, had become a sort of orgy of excitement; and I observed men and women watching with indifference poor people of German name—whose sons had been killed in France—driven into bankruptcy and asylums which he, Mr. Asquith, did not. He went on to discuss the aims of the Allies in relation to the German Empire, and quoted President Wilson who had said, 'No one is threatening the existence, the independence, the peaceful enterprise of the German Empire.' Mr. Asquith asserted that none of the Allies intended to prescribe the internal constitution of Germany in the future. But if there was to be a real pact it must rest on authentic proof that the German people were ready to set up the rule of common and equal right."

¹ In *Anthony and Cleopatra*, Act II, Scene 2, Lepidus has taken Enobarbus to task for saying that he intends to egg Anthony on to be rough-spoken to Cæsar. Lepidus remarks: "'Tis not a time for private stomaching." To which Enobarbus replies: "Every time serves for the matter that is then born in't."

A STUDY OF THE MARQUESS CURZON

by smashed windows, ruined trade, and other demonstrations of "patriotism." Anyone who like myself uttered a protest against this cruelty was called a pro-German; and when I said I admired the Lansdowne letter, I was looked upon with horror. (I think if in future wars the soldiers could return, and the non-fighters take their places we would need no League of Nations to settle international disputes.) Blindness of heart, against which we pray every Sunday, is what not only *creates*, but *continues*, every war.

Lord Lansdowne's noble and courageous contribution to Peace is a sufficient epitaph to be engraved upon his tomb.

* * * * *

Mr. Bonar Law was a very different man in dignity, resolution, and intellect. There are some men whom you may see often and like personally, but, however much you see and like them, you never really know them. Mr. Bonar Law was one of these. To those who knew him intimately he had much that was lovable and endearing, but, speaking for myself, I never thought he was either happy or at his ease in the society of his equals. He looked out for small personal slights which would have passed unnoticed by a man of size or authority. Though never robust in health, he was persistent, but he lacked confidence and his poor circulation made him suffer from what the world to-day would call "an inferiority complex." This was the more remarkable as his Parliamentary gifts were of a high order, and he rendered incalculable services to the Conservative Party.

The mixture in his nature of sly and simple—not uncommon in the Scottish race—did not encourage intimacy except with those who knew and loved him, and though he commanded the respect of the majority of his colleagues, he was never familiar with his opponents. It has been claimed for him by his admirers, that his

irresolute personality and lack of authority came from lack of ambition, but nothing could be farther from the truth. What interested me most about Mr. Bonar Law was his semi-uneasy, wholly persistent ambition, without which he could never have become Prime Minister. I have seldom found the man sincere, or even successful, who claimed to have no ambition. Doubtless there have been men of genius who have leapt from obscurity to fame; but as a rule ambition is the ladder that led to their success, and I have so much admiration and respect for it myself that I easily discern ambition in other people. But it must be accompanied by complete frankness; and though Mr. Bonar Law did not intend to deceive, his lack of self-confidence seemed to me to overcome his intentions, and on more than one occasion his candour was suspected.¹

There is nothing more difficult to gauge than the growth of man's ambition, but there are two dangers that go far to stunt it. The first is over self-esteem, which alienates you from your equals; and the second, under self-esteem, which surrounds you by your inferiors.

There will always be men who from good fortune or laudable ambition find themselves placed in situations for which they have not the adequate stature, and in consequence are surrounded by bullies, backers, or sycophants. They do not realize that they are the heroes of eavesdroppers, without which society would be less entertaining for the obscure.

I do not think Mr. Bonar Law's courage was equal to his ambition, and born without the quality of leadership he was aware of this when he joined the Coalition of 1915. He was more of a parliamentarian than a statesman, and had a remarkable verbal memory—speaking without notes and with great effect—which made him of infinite service to his party in the House of Commons.

¹ The best example of this was in the interview Mr. Bonar Law had with my husband on the afternoon of Sunday, December 3, 1916.



Russell

Sir Edward Morris
(Newfoundland)

General Botha
(South Africa)

Sir Joseph Ward
(New Zealand)

Sir Wilfred Laurier
(Canada)

Lord Oxford

Mr Andrew Fisher
(Australia)

The First Meeting of the Colonial Premiers

I may be wrong, but outside the House I do not think he had much personality.

During the last days of the political crisis in the winter of 1916 he derived a sort of uneasy pleasure in going from No. 10, to No. 11, Downing Street and repeating to me in guarded language what he had heard on the situation at No. 11. I was so interested in all he told me that at first I said little, but on his second visit I felt embarrassed and asked him what particular object he had in his mind in repeating tittle-tattle, to which he replied :

"The little man next door will jockey us all in turn—of this I think it right to warn you."

I never knew how much Mr. Bonar Law cared for any of his own colleagues but he was ill at ease with his Liberal opponents. Men like my husband, Sir Edward Grey, and Lord Crewe, he could never have understood, but I am told by those with whom he was on terms of intimacy that he was a loyal and affectionate friend.

Discussing him one day with Lord Carson—a man of infinite personal charm for whom I have always had a true affection—I said :

"If Mr. Bonar Law were a horse I would not buy him : he holds his head too low." To which Lord Carson replied :

"Poor Bonar !—Someone should say to him : ' Step out for the bid ! ' " ¹

He had a pathetic belief in the power of the Press, and even more than this, he believed in the judgment of "business men." I do not know how efficient he was himself in matters of business, or if the firm of "William Jacks & Co., Iron, Steel, & Metal Merchants," had any great reputation in Glasgow, but Mr. Law's confidence in business men must have been rudely shaken during the progress of the War, as it would be difficult to say

¹ This was said without malice, and merely in fun, as I believe Lord Carson had a high opinion of, and much affection for, Mr. Bonar Law.

MORE MEMORIES

at what period any of their prognostications were justified. There was not a City man at the outbreak of War that did not tell my husband that the fighting could not continue beyond Christmas. And, I may add, I do not remember the advice of "business men" being right during the whole time we were in Downing Street.

* * * * *

To return to my Diary :

"*Hackwood.* The conversation at dinner was general ; thanks to Henry, George, and myself, who always discouraged chit-chat with our neighbours when men of intellect and women of intelligence met at meals.

"It opened upon the Guildhall meeting, and Henry quoted what Pitt had said in his last public utterance, made in that very Hall.

" ' England has saved herself by her exertions, and will, as I trust, save Europe by her example.' "

"Mr. Bonar Law said little, and the talk was maintained by Lord Lansdowne, our host, and my husband.

"When we left the dining-room, the Queen,¹ Lady Lansdowne, and I, discussed how long we thought the War would last. I said it would certainly last two years as the German Army was the best equipped in Europe.

"At that moment, I had heard no discussions upon the duration of the War, but the Queen told me afterwards, that this remark of mine had amazed her ; and she thought my nerves must have been seriously unstrung, and such a lack of serenity upon my part would be a terrible drawback to the Prime Minister.²

"When the men joined us in the drawing-room things seemed rather flat, and George asked Mrs. Rubens to sing. I admired Henry, who, upon her acceptance,

¹ The Queen of the Belgians.

² Later on I heard that Lord Kitchener had said the War would last three years ; but the opinion of the generals, admirals, City men, and even some of the politicians that we saw in Downing Street, was that the War could only last a few months.

removed himself as far as possible from the piano and fingered a Bradshaw. George settled himself into a high, hard, gold Venetian chair, and listened with a pained but interested expression to 'Kissing at the Gate,' and other lively songs sung with frightening gusto by the pretty Mrs. Rubens. I amused myself watching the faces of the audience. Lord Lansdowne sat erect, with a wintry smile on his refined little face. Most of the ladies had the appearance of shocked finishing governesses, and Mr. Bonar Law looked like a Scotch grieve who had heard that 'the effect of the War has held back the bidding for black-faced rams at Lanark' : (an item of news that I had read that morning in the *Scotsman*).

"The next day my husband and I motored back to Downing Street."

* * * * *

After our visit to Hackwood, George and I met on many public occasions ; but it was not till the 25th of May, 1915, that he paid his first visit to me in 10, Downing Street. I welcomed him with a smile ; and could not resist saying :

"Well, dearest George—strange things have happened ; and now I suppose I can receive you again !"

I thought it would give him an opportunity of saying something charming to efface the effect that his foolish behaviour had had upon our friendship ; but he only looked embarrassed, and starched. My meaning had miscarried, and I felt that the morning glory of our early devotion had departed.

To canvass mutual friends and political opponents to ostracize myself and my husband, and by so doing separate me from Elizabeth in her first London season, had made me suffer ; and as we could not return to our old terms of freedom and intimacy I did not feel the same pleasure in his conversation. I was also profoundly depressed over the War.

I found my eyes wandering to the window when he was talking to me in my sitting-room ; and while with one ear I heard what he was saying, with the other I was listening to the tramping of feet, the singing of soldiers, and the martial music that accompanied the long trail of men who were recruiting below us in the tent on the Horse Guards Parade.

George Curzon had no sons fighting in the War.

My husband always liked meeting him because of his vitality and good humour, but they did not discuss politics, as he never at any time valued George's judgment. I sometimes wondered if this indifference was not perceivable, but they enjoyed talking of old days at Oxford, and Balliol was a bond of union between them. With the exception of myself, Mr. Alfred Spender,¹ Lord Crewe, and Sir Edward Grey, there was no one with whom my husband ever opened his heart to on politics : and upon their loyalty, judgment, and counsel, he relied with unbroken and justified confidence all through his public life.

He never at any time encouraged discussion upon colleagues or politics. During his whole term of office he had political problems of such magnitude to decide that it was a relief for him to talk of other matters ; and though he worked harder, quicker, and for longer hours than probably any Minister who ever occupied 10, Downing Street, he had trained himself to switch his mind out of hours on to subjects as far as possible from the questions of the day. There was no non-political subject that he did not delight in arguing with his family, and his home life was what he really enjoyed. I never knew a man who was fonder of children, and he seldom missed going to the night-nursery to hear his little son's prayers. In reading, rather than sleeping, he sought rest, and I often

¹ Mr. Alfred Spender is a man of courage, discretion, and judgment, who never made a mistake in the estimate of his fellow-creatures. His knowledge of affairs, respect for my husband, and affection for myself have been a reliable pleasure in my life.

found him in his arm-chair before I went to bed, buried in a dictionary, a detective story, a shilling-shocker, or the Bible.

At the time I am writing of, the quarrels between Lord Kitchener and Lord French had been augmented by the personal antagonisms of generals, admirals, and politicians, and though my husband was indifferent to the close communion between Mr. Lloyd George and Lord Northcliffe, it filled me with apprehension.

When Mr. Lloyd George was appointed to succeed Lord Kitchener at the War Office I considered it a Balaclava blunder, and wrote in my Diary, "We are out."¹

It was from no personal antagonism to Mr. Lloyd George that I thought my husband had made a wrong decision; but though I enjoyed his company I did not appreciate Mr. Lloyd George's companions or trust his loyalty, nor did I think his education or experience would enable him to understand our foreign Allies or the mentality of military men.

But my husband thought that I was prejudiced; and everything that savoured of political gossip was as abhorrent to him as men who fish in troubled waters. He hated personal encounters and never thought of himself. The War occupied his whole attention and he was too apprehensive about it to listen to what he had heard before. In spite of our mutual confidence, love, and understanding, we ceased to discuss the loyalty of Mr. Lloyd George, and it was the only subject that I can recall in all our married life upon which he and I were reserved, taciturn, and silent.

Looking back to-day over the happenings of 1916 I do not think that it was Mr. Lloyd George's² intention

¹ Lord Crewe told me this year that he would have resigned from the Cabinet had he known beforehand of my husband's decision.

² From what I have since learnt of the crisis of 1916 there seems to have been several entries for the competition to replace my husband in 10, Downing Street, but I think it only fair to say that the victory was won by the favourite.

to hit below the belt ; he had no dislike of his Prime Minister, but he never perceived a belt, and he exercised a personal charm by his magnetization and vitality that completely disarmed a man of my husband's nature and integrity.

* * * * *

The intrigues which followed upon Mr. Lloyd George's new appointment to supersede Sir William Robertson, Sir John Cowans, Lord Balfour, and Sir Douglas Haig, became unbearable ; and I lay awake for hours at night wondering if the same rivalries, jealousies, and pettiness had been exhibited in former wars.

* * * * *

Shortly before we left Downing Street (in December, 1916), George Curzon spent a week-end with us at The Wharf.

We sat talking together long after the other guests had gone to bed. He said he did not understand all the Press and political intrigue that was going on, and that whatever the outcome, neither he, nor any other Conservative, would ever serve under Lloyd George if his intention was—with the help of the Northcliffe newspapers—to supersede my husband as Prime Minister. He had always disliked Mr. Lloyd George,¹ loathed intrigue, and could not make out what all the rumpus and gossip were about. I was the more ready to believe him, when I thought of the two letters I received from

¹ George Curzon lunched in Downing Street after the Elections of 1910 and asked me who had been nearest in predicting the results of the General Election.

George. "Wasn't I pretty near, Marge?"

Margot. "Was it you who wired me that the majority would be Radicals 175?"

George. "Of course!—who did you think it was?"

Margot. "Mr. Lloyd George."

George. "Good Heavens!—what a relief to think that he does not sign himself 'David' to you."

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him over the Parliament Bill—which he had begun by opposing but ended by supporting.

1911. NALDERA,
BROADSTAIRS.

(Confidential)

DEAREST MARGIE,

Don't be alarmed. We have no idea of being sat upon, ousted, or extinguished by the Diehards. We are taking our measures and are quite competent to meet them. I have been away here with the children collecting money for the Geographical Society and—a book. Therefore I have been out of all the slush and slime of intrigue—I never was any good at it. But if A. J. B.¹ will play up, we will see him through. Some of us however who are not physically too strong, see our best years sliding away.

Your
GEORGE.

On the 25th July, 1911, he wrote from 1, Carlton House Terrace in answer to a letter of mine congratulating him upon his courage.

July 25th, 1911.

MY DEAREST MARGE,

There is no courage in doing the obvious and inevitable thing : though I think there is great folly in *not* doing it. I suppose we stand a good chance of being drummed out, but where will the drummers be, and what tune will they be playing in six months?

Your affec.,
GEORGE.

With this in my mind, I said to myself, "perhaps George will be able to expose all the intrigues, and influence our opponents as he did over the Parliament Bill." (But I should have known better, as the Tories have never objected to borrowed leaders. I remember the time when they could not endure Joseph Chamberlain and ended by worshipping him : and in the days of his Budget and Limehouse speech Mr. Lloyd George was not popular with them.)

Seeing how unhappy I was that night at The Wharf some of George's old tenderness returned. He put his

¹ Lord Balfour.

arm round me and assured me that there was no reason for my distress ; no one had the brains or authority to take Henry's place, and whoever else desired Mr. Lloyd George as their political leader neither he nor Arthur Balfour would ever serve under him

We discussed at length which of the Conservative Ministers were likely to prefer Mr. Lloyd George's leadership to my husband's. He assured me that there was not *one*, and that Arthur Balfour would never give his consent to such an idea. Somewhat consoled by our conversation, and seeing the hour was late, I said good night to George and went upstairs to my husband's bedroom. I told him all that George Curzon had said, upon which he said that though he did not doubt George's loyalty, he rather doubted that of others of the Conservative Party : they were quite capable of deserting him for a man they did not trust. Seeing how unhappy I was, he said that without Arthur Balfour Lloyd George could never form a Government I kissed him and left the room.

Crossing over the garden to my Barn bedroom in the moonlight I felt overwhelmingly unhappy. I wondered if he was right—would they desert a man they respected to serve under a man they did not trust? I had little confidence in Curzon—but what about Lord Robert Cecil, Mr. Arthur Henderson, who said much the same to me as George had . . . I went back to my husband's bedroom as I could not close an eye for thinking of him

We talked far into the night.

* * * * *

About the events which followed I shall only write a sentence.

The night before we left 10, Downing Street for Walmer Castle—from which we never returned to No. 10—undressing, I went after to my husband's bedroom and sat on the arm of his chair. I found him reading his Bible, and while I was leaning over his shoulder he

1. *arrived 12.12.1925*
H. H. Russell
Jan 1925



Photopress

Lord and Lady Oxford walking in the village of Sutton Courtney

pointed to the text in Luke—(Chapter xxii, Verse 61)—
 “Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.”

* * * * *

In 1923 I published my Autobiography which I would never have written, but for a new friendship that I had formed. As it was the first book that I published, it is perhaps of interest to say how it came about that I wrote it.

I received a courteous letter from—to me—an unknown publisher, signed “Thornton Butterworth,” offering me a fantastic sum if I would write my life. As I had never published anything but two innocuous articles for magazines upon General Booth, and horse-coping, I took no notice of this letter. A few weeks later, my daughter Elizabeth (Princess Antoine Bibesco) introduced me to Mr. Teixeira de Mattos and in the course of conversation he said that he had a friend called “Butterworth,” a charming fellow, who was a new publisher, and that I ought to have answered his letter asking me to write my Autobiography.

Regretting my lack of courtesy to his friend, I told him that I had no sort of literary training, and that all I could do was to write of persons and events with accuracy, as I had kept a diary all my life of the most candid kind, never intended for publication; therefore I had enough material to write several books; but I detested gossip, and was irritated by the habit some writers had, to save themselves from censure by initialling their characters with, “Mr. X——” “Mrs. Y——” and “Miss Z——.” If I wrote frankly it would delight my enemies, and if I wrote cautiously¹ it would bore my friends, so in the circumstances it would be wiser for me to refuse Mr. Butterworth’s offer.

Nevertheless, Mr. Teixeira—who could charm the bark off a tree—continued pressing me to write my life.

¹I remember Raymond Asquith telling me to read my friend Doll Liddell’s “Recollections,” as there were comments upon Glen and myself which might interest me. He added: “Liddell blurts out with pardonable indiscretion that Kitchener has a moustache.”

I did not realize when we left Downing Street that our income would not be sufficient for us to live in Cavendish Square, and when my husband told me we should have to sell the beautiful house that my father had given me, I was sleepless with misery.

One of the many strange things I have observed in life is the way that people can part with servants, give up places, sell possessions, and even drop friends without more than a passing pang. I have friends who buy and live in new houses every few years ; they have no roots, and to be easily transplanted must lighten many of the sorrows of life ; but I am differently constructed ; I cling to my servants, loathe parting with possessions, and have mourned the moors of Glen, the woods at Archerfield,¹ and the islands seen from the links of that lovely coast, all my life. I know every corner of my house when I go to bed in the dark, and would miss familiar objects even of no great beauty that I have been accustomed to live with. When I am depressed, the prints, clocks, china and pictures, seem to nod at me as I pass. They belong to the rhythm of my daily life and tearing up associations would break my heart.

I have never worried about money, and am one of the few women I know who have made a correct estimate of it ; but a man may sacrifice an income at the Bar, serve his King and country for over twenty years and leave 10, Downing Street a poor man ; and when you have always lived on a certain scale it is difficult to alter it. I had had no practice in "reduced circumstances," and when we decided to leave Cavendish Square I remembered Mr. Butterworth, and his wonderful letter ; and after consulting John Morley, my husband, Arthur Balfour, and Lord Crewe—who all urged me to write with complete candour—I sent a letter to Mr. Butterworth and started upon my Autobiography.

I showed it to no one but Lord Crewe (and later to

¹Archerfield (near North Berwick) was a place my brother Frank Tennant lent us, where we spent six autumns.

Sir Edmund Gosse), as I was anxious my husband should not be involved in anything that I wrote.

I have seldom looked at the book since it was published, but though heavily attacked by strangers and the Press, some people liked it,¹ and my husband's praise consoled me for all that was said against it.

Unfortunately in writing of George Curzon I said he had a childish love of fine people, or something of the kind, for which he never forgave me. This was stupid of him, as until the public read in my book his brilliant verses on "The Souls," most of them were unaware of his rare gaiety, and brilliant sense of humour; but it definitely proved how brittle was the texture of his love if it could fray over such a trifle!—I think it is Bacon who writes "your heart should not be an island cut off from other lands; but a continent that joins to them," and Tolstoy writes in his Diary (1853): "The means to gain happiness in life is, to throw out from oneself like a spider in all directions an adhesive web of love, and to catch in it all that comes: an old woman, a child, a girl, a policeman."

But this was a philosophy that Curzon never understood. The most real thing in life—in fact, almost the *only* real thing—is *persons*, and their relation to one another, and when we had this final estrangement I knew that George Curzon had outgrown the necessity for my friendship, and that nothing in the future would bring us together again.

After reading my Autobiography, in spite of meeting him on many occasions, to my unending regret George Curzon never spoke to me, and the day he invited me to dine with him to put an end to our quarrels was the day on which he died.

¹ My son-in-law Antoine Bibesco, Countess Russell, and my taxi-driver admired my Autobiography; and this year (1931) the greatest of our English authoresses—Virginia Woolf—told me that my writing had always given her pleasure.

CHAPTER VIII

KINGS AND GOVERNMENTS

THERE are, and always will be, ingenious authors who like writing books or plays about the future, and people who enjoy reading them. They prophesy that in a few centuries the conditions of life will be unrecognizably changed. We shall eat no meat, wear no clothes, give up horses, hunting, shooting, marriage, and trains : the millionaires will live in flats, the middle classes in bungalows, the poor in tin tenements, and all who can afford it will have their private aeroplanes in their back gardens.

As long as prophecy is confined to millions of years ahead when the sun will be round the corner, the moon at our feet, the grass stone, and the flowers forests, I do not mind ; but as none of us knows what is likely to happen even three days ahead, I find books and plays on the future habits of man tedious and unprofitable. But there are changes taking place to-day that encourage men to hazard a guess that the time may come when there will be no more Emperors, Kings, Palaces, or Royal Princes. It is within the recollection of all of us that three great nations have dethroned their Sovereigns : Germany, Russia, and Spain ; and though there is little that is encouraging to make us think either Presidents, Dictators, or Democracy satisfying changes from Monarchy, there is a movement all over the world to-day which cannot be entirely ignored. Just as the wide sea floods unchecked into creeks and inlets undermining the security of the cliffs, you can see the Democracies of our Colonies, and other nations, moving steadily forward in

the direction of independence, or what is called "Self-determination."

Without hazarding any prophecy, I think it is safe to predict that we shall not live to see another Ras Tafari crowned as "King of Kings," "The conquering Lion of Judah" and "Power of the Trinity"; guarded by officers whose helmets were trimmed with lions' manes and attended by bishops holding Coptic crosses in one hand and small red-befringed umbrellas in the other. The Emperor of Ethiopia seems to be a Sovereign of power and originality, and our King showed his usual dignity and consideration when he sent his son—the Duke of Gloucester—to represent him at this spectacular and gorgeous coronation. But though there is a Monarchist Party in every Parliament except our own, it looks for the moment as if foreign monarchs may become museum pieces.

Speaking for myself, I cannot imagine a wiser form of Government than ours. It is built upon centuries of political experience, and our King is as much part of it as the mayors, miners, manufacturers, labourers, and landowners. Till I see money spent on the betterment of man instead of on his idleness and destruction, I shall not believe in any perfect form of government; but this will depend upon the public opinion of the world more than the private power of any Sovereign, and I see nothing in other countries to make me believe in the stability or superiority of a government conducted without Kings.

Dictators are neither to be envied nor emulated, and Presidents have little power. You may for a time dragoon people into complete subservience to the State: make beggars fewer, Exchequers richer, and trains more punctual; but stamping out freedom and individuality leads to a network of spies, stagnation of intellect, and a sullen resistance that ends in machine guns. There is a Spanish proverb which I recommend to all who believe in Force: "He who rides on a tiger can never dismount." The unhappy example of Russia—about which

few travellers are allowed to know the truth—who having got rid of her Tsar is disposing of her God, does nothing to make me believe in the providence of State control ; and Democracy without religion is little more than a mob.

There are no class distinctions in the United States of America, and the Statue of Liberty greets every traveller who arrives from the sea to her shores. But the statue does not symbolize the truth : there is very little liberty or freedom in America. Her inhabitants are full of generosity, vitality, and invention, and just as in France the women are superior to the men, American men are superior to American women. But from the limits of her inelastic constitution, and in spite of her natural hustle she is constrained to go slow. There are more religions than philosophers in her States, and from the days of Moody and Sankey to the doctrines of Mrs. Eddy, America has advertised her spiritual progress. But spiritual progress has always been hampered by financial prosperity, and the fabulous and reckless fortunes made after the war have had tragic results for this vital and generous nation.

America is is not the only country that is suffering to-day from a sort of moral vulgarity and lack of spiritual progress. Demanding rash sums of money from debtors who are in difficulty, while excluding the only means by which they might eventually receive some kind of payment, has punished every nation except our own. Free trade is not a policy ; it is an attitude of mind—a religion which refuses to believe that nations and individuals can only prosper at the expense of their neighbours. If high tariffs in any country had succeeded in lowering the tariffs of others, there might be something to be said for them, but it has not been the experience of the world, and I remember Mr. Gladstone saying to me in 1894 at Hawarden, that America would never be formidable till she returned to her original system of free interchange and co-operation with foreign countries.

What struck me most when I was in the United States was the absence of public opinion. The newspapers gave all the news, were brilliantly written, and were so up-to-date that they advertised shows of mannequins in shrouds. But they hurried over happenings which would have horrified people over here, and the official report of her prison system hardly raised a whimper in her Press. A nation can never be great that makes laws that are not obeyed, and the defiance of law and increase of concerted crime in America, culminating in the murder of the Lindbergh baby, staggered the civilized world. Misfortune brings many changes and by the time this book is published we shall probably see bad laws repealed and good judges appointed,¹ and a general lowering of tariffs. More from universal pressure than individual leadership every nation will realize that the accumulation of gold does not mean prosperity, and those who do not realize this may ultimately share the fate of the money-changers who were turned out of the Temple. What makes a country great is order and Freedom. In this country we do not ask for Freedom as a favour, we claim it as a right.

Froude writes : " History is a voice for ever sounding across the centuries the law of Right and Wrong. Opinions alter, manners change, creeds rise and fall, but the moral law is written on tablets of Eternity. Justice and Truth alone endure. . . . "

In a lecture on Decadence, delivered by Lord Balfour at Newnham College in 1908, he writes of the Roman Empire :

" There might be more than one Emperor : but there could only be one Empire.

" Howsoever an observer might disapprove of the Imperial System, he would have to admit that the Empire, with all its shortcomings—its absolutism, and its

¹ The salary of a judge in the United States is not big enough to encourage men of high type.

bureaucracy—had solved more successfully than any Government, before or since, the problem of devising a scheme which equally satisfied the sentiments of East and West ; which respected local feelings, encouraged local government ; in which the Celt, the Iberian, the Berber, the Egyptian, the Asiatic, the Greek, the Illyrian, the Italian, were all at home, and which—though based on conquest—was accepted by the conquered as the natural organization of the civilized world.”

This is what we have seen in our own British Empire. It is not from Jingo Imperialism or any sort of militarism that we have attained success in governing the races we have conquered, but from our sense of Justice and of Liberty. It may be said that being an island, it was easier for us to be independent of the fears and jealousies that boundaries foster in foreign countries, but in other ways it is more remarkable that from such isolated and small beginnings we should have covered so much ground.

I will quote a letter written by Lord Inchcape,¹ which was published in *The Times*, because, with the exception of Lord Lansdowne’s famous contribution to Peace, it is the only letter I ever saw my husband cut out of a newspaper. Although the subject of it was Free Trade, I will quote one paragraph as it is applicable to the growth and foundation of the British Empire, and the victory of Freedom over Fear.

Lord Inchcape dates his letter the 29th of November, 1923.

We [the British people] made a sounder choice when we decided to go out and build up trade with every corner of the globe. . . . We took enormous risks ; but time has justified them. We sacrificed security in the matter of home-raised food for the sake of a world-wide commerce ; and had we not made that sacrifice, we could never have grown to our present greatness, size, and wealth. The price we pay for our boldness in rearing a population three times as large as we can feed from our own soil is that we depend upon

¹ The late Viscount Inchcape.

other lands for two-thirds of our food supplies. No other nation in the world is in anything like this position. . . .

We of all people should know, as a matter of daily experience that our prosperity depends on the prosperity of others : that no nation can grow rich on another's poverty, and that our interest lies in promoting the maximum of social and political security and industrial Freedom everywhere.

In the Letters Missive¹ of Edward VI is written :

Forasmuch as the great and Almighty God hath given unto mankind above all living creatures, such an heart and desire, that every man desireth to join friendship with other, to love and be loved, also to give and receive mutual benefits ; it is therefore the duty of all men according to their power to maintain and increase this desire in every man, with well deserving to all men, and especially to show this good affection to such as being moved with this desire come to them from far countries. . . . For the God of Heaven and earth, greatly providing for mankind, would not that all things should be found in one region, to the end that one should have need of another, that by this means, friendship might be established among all men, and every one seek to gratify all.

The British race has many defects : it is insular, conservative, and conceited ; but it is the only race that I have known which has an almost unconscious sense of Justice and of Freedom. We have trained the countries we have conquered to believe in this Justice and Freedom, and must not be surprised if we see them—from Egypt to India—taking advantage of our training, and any British Government that thwarts the ambitions of their Dependencies to-day may be in danger of severing us from valued and ancient possessions. Drawing strings too tight whether between man and wife, Crowns and Colonies, or Rulers and subjects, is contrary to all wisdom, and in the end brings a stubborn resistance. Force is the undertaker of Freedom ; discipline the begetter of it.

You cannot counter the aspirations of nations that feel the humiliation of a foreign yoke, and we have had

¹ Letters Missive is another name for " Letters under the King's Privy Signet " which were documents by which the Chancellor was authorized to affix the Great Seal to Charters and Letters Patent.

examples as recent as the settlements of Ireland and South Africa, to prove the truth of this.

At the time that the British Government decided to give Ireland her independence, Sir Austen Chamberlain made a striking speech in the House of Commons. He said he regretted the vote that he had given in the House against the Transvaal Constitution (a Constitution that my husband took endless trouble to frame, a large part of which he wrote with his own hand). He had done it because he thought at the time that it was a "rash and wicked thing to do." He went on to say :

"That great act, that daring act of faith, led directly to the reconciliation of the races in South Africa ; it brought South Africa into the war with us, and added German East Africa and German South-West Africa to British territory. Now and again in the affairs of men there comes a moment when courage is safer than prudence, when some great act of faith touching the hearts and stirring the emotions of men, achieves miracles that no arts of Statesmanship can compass."

I have sometimes criticized my friend Sir Austen Chamberlain for taking what I thought—probably wrongly—wooden views upon world events ; but his speech on this occasion, and his conduct throughout the years that have passed have proved what my husband always said, that Austen Chamberlain is a man of simpleness of purpose and the highest integrity. In connexion with Home Rule for Ireland I remember the Irish argument I had with my husband. We were on our honeymoon, which we spent at Mells Park (lent to us by Sir John and Lady Horner). In discussing where we should spend the first week of our honeymoon we agreed that if our greatest friend—Lady Horner ¹—would lend us her lovely Mells we would rather go there than anywhere.

¹ Frances Horner has by her sympathy, gaiety, and intellect, captivated the great social world of two generations.

We were walking in the woods by the lake when, in the course of a political discussion, I said that I thought it was a Balaclava blunder on the part of Mr. Gladstone to persist in his policy of Home Rule as it was damaging the prospects of the Liberal Party.

He looked at me and replied : " We are bound to lose Ireland in consequence of years of cruelty, stupidity and misgovernment and I would rather lose her as a friend than a foe."

Looking at the present state of affairs in Ireland I think he was right.

* * * * *

My object, however, in this chapter is not to write upon politics but upon King Edward and the increasing popularity of our Monarchy.

Speaking for myself, it is not the grandeur of individuals—often exalted to positions of eminence from inheritance more than from any capacity, or character—but the grandeur of situations that has always had glamour for me ; but I have known many remarkable men and women who do not share this feeling, and are subconsciously awed in the presence of even minor Royalties. It is perhaps unfair to call this feeling one of snobbishness, but it is sometimes accompanied by it. It is difficult to discover what form of snobbishness there is in our fellow-creatures ; and the least objectionable—as it is the least perceivable—is a love for Royal personages.

There is a snobbism in Art—which expresses itself in a language that I do not understand ; a snobbism in Knowledge—often shallow and lately acquired ; a snobbism in News—when people desire to be the first to inform you of something which will distress you ; and a snobbism in vaunting an intimacy with men who have risen from obscurity to fame. And there is a curious, and inverted snobbism in people who say they despise Royalty, do not wish to wear gold lace, and never intend to go to any Court function.

I remember when Mr. John Burns—the first Labour Member of Parliament to be put into a Cabinet—told the Prime Minister that nothing would make him wear the laced uniform of a Privy Councillor. My husband would not listen to this, and as Mr. John Burns has a magnificent appearance, and great common sense, he was over-persuaded, and no one was more popular at Court than he was. After his first visit to King Edward at Sandringham he came to 10, Downing Street to tell us about it. He said that he had got on marvellously well with their Majesties ; had risen early in the morning, and visited every farm and cottage on the Sandringham estate and ended by saying :

“ I can tell you, my dear Prime Minister—I pulled out *all* the stops ! ”

No one ever made more penetrating remarks about his Cabinet colleagues than Mr. John Burns, but as he, and many of those colleagues are alive, I shall refrain from quoting them. He is a man who followed the advice of Marcus Aurelius, who says whoever you are and in whatever situation you may be placed, you must keep your colour. Mr. John Burns has never lost his colour.

Kings both as symbols, and as individuals, have inspired some of the finest passages in literature and, speaking for myself, ceremonies would have little glamour were they not enhanced by the presence of Princes or Kings.

Shakespeare writes :

“ Not all the water in the rough rude sea
Can wash the balm from an anointed king.
The breath of worldly men cannot depose
The deputy elected by the Lord.”

King Richard II, Act III, Sc. 2.

“ The figure of God’s Majesty,
His captain, steward, deputy elect
Anointed, crowned——”

King Richard II, Act IV, Sc. 1.

And Marlowe writes :

“Is it not brave to be a king, Techelles?
Is it not passing brave to be a king,
And ride in triumph through Persepolis?”

“To be a king is half to be a god.”

“A god is not so glorious as a king.
I think the pleasure they enjoy in Heaven,
Cannot compare with kingly joys in earth,—
To wear a crown encased with pearl and gold,
Whose virtues carry with it life and death;
To ask and have, command and be obeyed;
When looks breed love, with looks to gain the prize,
Such power attractive shines in princes’ eyes!”

Tamburlaine.

Strafford writes in his Confession of Faith :

“Subjects ought with solicitous eyes of jealousy to watch over the prerogatives of the Crown : the authority of a King is the key-stone which closeth up the arch of order and Government.”

But there is a deep-seated independence in the Scottish race that prevents them from any form of social subservience ; and though invariably courteous, and at their ease, Scotsmen take it for granted that all men are their equals. It is a wise assumption, and one that has always distinguished my race : and breeds gentlemen.

Kings and Queens are in a separate category. They are symbols, and denote the veneration that men of all classes feel for their superiors ; and nations or individuals who are insensible to this symbolism, are in danger of losing much of the atmosphere and dignity of life. It is *not* servility, but self-respect, that makes school children curtsy to their Squire, and Duchesses curtsy to their King.

There is something more profound than vulgar curiosity that makes human beings care for bands, banners, ceremony, and display. Watching vast crowds assembled to do honour to some great national hero, or great public event, fills me with emotion. There is a corporate conscience in an orderly crowd which though difficult to

define is easy to perceive, and I am not the only spectator that I have observed with tears in their eyes when multitudes of men and women are collected to see Princes, Pioneers, Admirals, Generals, Bishops, Archbishops, Mayors, and Ministers, moved by an overwhelming sentiment and common purpose.

To see low lines of silver battleships on the horizon of the sea, regiments and brigades in scarlet and khaki, blue sailors and marines, boy scouts, hospital nurses, and processions of bannered and earnest public bodies all marching as if in single file past our King is a sight to move the least emotional.

It is the personal love of our Sovereign, and confidence in our elastic and stable government (evolved from long experience, and based upon order and freedom) that differentiate us from other nations ; and I doubt if the President of any Republic, or Dictator,—whether in Russia, Spain, Italy, or elsewhere—will ever arouse the same private love and profound enthusiasm.

It is not merely the British institutions—represented by the Government of the day—but the personality of our Kings and Queens, that will always inspire the enthusiasm of our common crowds.

During King George's long illness, I observed in every theatre in London and the provinces, the audience—from the pit to the stalls—moved by a common emotion while standing with bowed heads to listen to the orchestra playing the National Anthem.

This mass production of British sentiment is of far greater value to a nation than the extortion of War debts, the raising of tariff walls, the inexpensive acquisition of Ford cars, or any successful speculation in stocks and shares.

The tradition of good Governments, and successful Sovereigns may be envied, but can never be emulated by Presidents ; because Presidents come and go at the whim of the masses, and have no abiding residence in the hearts of the people. It is contact with what is *human*,

that makes men loyal ; and all the handshaking, broadcasting, and loud-speakers in the world will not make up for this personal contact.

* * * * *

The idea that because our Sovereigns are not permitted to interfere with the decisions of any Government—whether Liberal, Labour, or Tory—that they have no political leanings is erroneous. Like the rest of us, they are human, and though they were sufficiently diplomatic to control every outward sign of their private persuasions, each of the Sovereigns that I have personally known had convinced political opinions.

Queen Victoria was dazzled by Disraeli, and incapable of appreciating his rival—Mr. Gladstone. In spite of her profound common sense and absorption in politics it did not take a witch to discover that the Queen was a convinced Conservative. In her letters you observe her thoughts constantly recurring to the Disraeli days. In 1885 we read : “The anniversary of dear Lord Beaconsfield’s death. Oh, were he but still alive !” ; and in 1886, the year of the first Home Rule Bill : “Primrose Day ! already five long years since good Lord Beaconsfield was taken !”

A man as polished, dexterous, and captivating as Disraeli will always influence my sex more than a man of Mr. Gladstone’s austerity and conviction. The more feminine and domestic a woman is the more she enjoys the unexpected and adventurous, and the effrontery and attentions of a Prime Minister like Disraeli, delighted a woman who took herself as seriously as Queen Victoria. But King Edward told me himself that he thought it wrong of his mother not to have said something gracious to such an old and distinguished public servant as Mr. Gladstone, when—upon his resignation—he bade her a permanent farewell.

When King Edward came to the throne it was not surprising that his political leanings were the opposite of

his mother's ; and he made no secret of his sympathy with Liberalism. As Prince of Wales he had been subjected to a good deal of criticism by a certain section of the Nonconformist Press ; but although my husband was a Nonconformist, he did not approve of the moral censure expressed about the Prince and thought he had been unfairly treated over the Tranby Croft baccarat scandal about which he had no more responsibility than the man in the moon.¹ People's private affairs should not be exploited for Press purposes and in those days it was not the fashion for newspapers to play up to what is least reputable in human nature. The Nonconformist Conscience is as elastic as any other conscience, but it had a political Press power in my youth which it does not possess to-day.

In spite of criticisms made upon betting, baccarat, Law Courts, loves, and ladies, the Prince of Wales ² had a popularity only equalled by our present Prince. He was adored in private circles and public places, and mobbed and cheered on every race-course and theatre in England and France ; it was the ambition of all the hostesses in London to entertain him.

Queen Victoria having vowed herself to a professional widowhood had installed her heir, and his beautiful Princess,³ to replace her at Court functions, and they became the leaders of all that was distinguished in society. The Court played a far larger part in London then than it does to-day. The reason for this is partly due to the War, and partly to the development of Democracy.

One of the many reasons why King Edward was popular was because he was easily amused, loved Society, and was what Americans would call, "a great sport." He was habitually gracious, good-humoured, hungry, and

¹ What damaged the Prince of Wales was the fact that he took his own cards and counters to Tranby Croft, and his letter to the Archbishop of Canterbury in which he said he abhorred gambling had the opposite effect of the one he had intended.

² King Edward.

³ Queen Alexandra.

in high spirits. He never minded meeting dull or famous people, and was the most gregarious of Monarchs. In spite of a little private card-playing he was never a gambler, and whatever criticism he may have provoked in his youth, upon his accession to the throne he realized his new responsibilities, and respected the sound opinion of his Ministers.

The beauty and distinction of the Princess of Wales seemed to remove her from the society of all but her intimate friends, and I, among hundreds, would stand for hours in the rain to see her drive through the streets without a thought of ever meeting her. But as the Prince moved in many circles, I treasured the hope that I might one day perhaps meet and converse with him.

In spite of a large house in Grosvenor Square and my father being rich and in Parliament, we knew very few people when I made my debut in London, and discouraged by receiving hardly any invitations to balls or parties I persuaded my brother Eddy¹ to take me to the Ascot races, and after considerable difficulty we succeeded in receiving vouchers for the Royal Enclosure. While I was in conversation with the beautiful Lady Dalhousie (whose husband was an ardent Liberal) the Prince of Wales² came up to her, and before I had time to move away, asked her to present me to him. After a little general chit-chat he suggested that we should go to the Paddock and see the horses saddled for the next race.

I felt my spirits rise as, walking slowly across the crowded lawn in grilling sunshine, I observed everyone making way for us with lifted hats and low curtsies. The Prince appeared to me then—as he did every time I met him—to be the happiest man in the world. Our conversation was a little halting. We agreed that Lady Dalhousie was beautiful; we disagreed over Lord Dalhousie being “a bit of a Socialist”; and we were both glad the day was fine. He asked me if I was fond

¹ The late Lord Glenconner.

² King Edward.

of racing. I told him that it was the first time I had ever been to a race-meeting, and that I did not know the name of a single trainer, owner, or race-horse.

He could not have been more surprised if I had said that I had never seen a bird without a cage ; and with the keenness of a child, he pointed out the Duke of Westminster, the Duchess of Montrose, Lord Durham, Lord Hartington, Fred Archer, and other notabilities of the racing world. My extreme ignorance delighted him ; and after seeing some of the horses saddled, with a circulating smile to his retreating friends, he and I walked down to the Paddock railings.

The "Wokingham Stakes" was the next race. The Prince said he knew nothing of the chances of the long list of runners, but suggested that we should have a bet and back our fancy for any horse that galloped past the railings. With the luck that only happens to novices I spotted the winner in a horse called "Wokingham," and I could not have been happier if my horse had won the Derby.

The Prince said that he would send me a cigarette case. I was thrilled with excitement, and modestly asked him if there was no book, or anything that I could give him in memory of the "Wokingham Stakes." He said he hardly ever read a book, and all he wanted was my friendship. At his request, I lunched in the Guards' tent and sat upon the left of my new Royal acquaintance. The Guards' tent was hot, and full of fashionable people, and whether from the noise of the band, the length of the lunch, or the iced champagne—which I mistook for hock cup—I felt rather tipsy as I stepped over the red cloth when we emerged from the tent. But I recovered from this directly we were in the open air.

Realizing that it was time I rejoined my brother, I told the Prince I would leave him, but he said there was no hurry, so we strolled about among the coaches, costers, gipsies and acrobats. On returning to the

Royal Enclosure I curtsied to the Prince and looked everywhere for my brother Eddy, but, as he hated horses, racing, and society, he was nowhere to be found. A heavy shower threatened to spoil my new dress and, feeling lonely, I made up my mind to return to London. I threaded my way through a crowd of umbrellas to the railway station. A fine-looking young man came up to me :

"Take my arm, Mrs. Sassoon," he said, "and I will see that you are not jostled in this crowd."

I was so thankful that I put my arm confidently through his, and we arrived damp and breathless at Ascot station.

I said to him as I got into the railway carriage, "I fear I am not Mrs. Sassoon ; but nevertheless I am *most* grateful to you."¹

He asked me what my name was, and when I said, "Margot Tennant," I could see it conveyed nothing to him, and lifting his hat he returned to the race-course.

I never found out who he was, but when I made the acquaintance many years later of Mrs. Arthur Sassoon—one of the most delightful women I have ever known—I felt that I had received a rare and lasting compliment.

The day after the races, the Prince of Wales sent me a gold shark-skin cigarette case with a diamond and sapphire clasp which thrilled me with pleasure. I was so anxious to show it to Peter Flower—an act of malice on my part—that I put it in the pocket of my riding habit. After receiving the reluctant congratulations of my admirer, we galloped down Rotten Row, and when I returned home I found my lovely present had fallen

¹ Lady Constance Leslie's daughter, Mrs. Hope, told me that her mother who was exceptionally good-looking had once been taken for a very plain and well-known lady in Society. "You have made a mistake," said Lady Constance, "but I have prayed all my life that God should make me humble, and to-day He has answered my prayer."

out of my pocket, and I never saw the cigarette case again.

After my introduction to the Prince of Wales I was invited to London houses where I had never been, and danced and talked with him at every ball and party.

His early training was of a kind to make him long for a little latitude in pleasure. Men did not interest him, and like Disraeli, he delighted in the society of women. He was stimulated by their company, intrigued by their entanglements, flattered by their confidence, and valued their counsel, and though the most loyal of friends he was a professional love-maker. But as I liked talking, and he hated listening—and I was seldom in London—our friendship was maintained by letter writing, where the Prince of Wales was not at his best.

After that memorable London Season, the Prince's private secretary—Sir Francis Knollys¹—came to Glen on his way to Balmoral. As the ideas of all Royal persons are booked for months beforehand by those who surround them, it is important that they should be guided in the right direction, and Queen Victoria, King Edward, and King George, were singularly fortunate in having for their private secretaries Sir Henry Ponsonby, Lord Knollys and Lord Stamfordham. It is perhaps not inappropriate that I should write about these three men before returning to the main theme of the chapter.

I knew very few courtiers—if such you could call him—when I first met Queen Victoria's private secretary, and I shall never forget the charm of Sir Henry Ponsonby, or the wit of his conversation, and balance of his judgment. We delighted in his sense of humour, and when he stayed at Glen—for a short reprieve from the Court duties that ultimately overwhelmed him—we sat round him in our moorland picnics fascinated by everything he said to us.

When my husband was Home Secretary he told me that

¹ The late Viscount Knollys.

he looked forward to all the answers that Sir Henry Ponsonby would be obliged to write to him from Windsor, Balmoral, and Sandringham, as he knew there would be some phrase, or comment in every letter which would entertain him.

King Edward's private secretary—Lord Knollys—was less intellectual, but keener about politics than Sir Henry ; and like many men who live at Court, was an ardent Liberal.

I was twenty when he came to Glen on his way to Balmoral with Mr. Christopher Sykes, a friend and butt of his master—King Edward. When I say "butt," I imply nothing unkind, as it was the fashion in those days to select some private friend for social chaff. Mr. Christopher Sykes was a Courtier in the best sense of the word, and adored his King. His droll and ready replies relieved some of the formality of the luncheons where I occasionally met him and his master. A kinder, more considerate and courteous man than King Edward never lived. I was only twenty—and young at that—when Mr. Sykes and Lord Knollys came to Glen, and as the weather was fine, the latter and I spent long hours on the moors together. At the age of twenty everyone over thirty-five appears old, and when Lord Knollys asked me to marry him, I thought his great age must have affected his reason. I am bound to confess that when I said "No," the expression on his face was one more of relief than disappointment.

There was much quiet wisdom, added to great stability, and discretion, which made Lord Knollys a valuable go-between in the relations of 10, Downing Street and Buckingham Palace ; and after my husband became Prime Minister we missed no opportunity of seeing him. He had an unshaken belief in my husband's character and ability, and remained our devoted friend till the day he died.

The first time I met Lord Stamfordham was when travelling in the train with my mother to Clovelly Court

—the lovely place belonging to Mrs. Hamlyn.¹ It was a grilling hot day, and when the footman had put my dressing-case and luncheon-basket into our railway carriage he asked if he should leave the fur rug with us. Feeling overcome with heat, I said :

“ I don’t care a damn what you do with it ! ”

Observing the expression on the faces of a lady and gentleman sitting opposite me I was not sure if they were shocked or amused. They were both well dressed, and the man so handsome that I longed to know who he was. Seeing them eating skimpy sandwiches as our journey progressed, I asked them to share in our lunch, after which we entered into conversation. We discussed Gladstone and politics etc., and when we parted I saw “ Col. Sir Arthur Bigge ” printed on his luggage.

My dear friend died this year, and I do not think I can say anything more descriptive of him than what I wrote in the *Sunday News*, Easter Sunday (April 5, 1931).

With the death of Lord Stamfordham the King has lost a devoted personal friend and a loyal private servant ; and we of his subjects who knew and loved Lord Stamfordham, are mourning with his Majesty to-day.

I never met a man of more unbeglamoured mind, steadier judgment, or one less influenced by grandeur, ceremonial, and display than Lord Stamfordham.

He detested pretension, was irritated by ostentation, and had little reverence for rank ; nevertheless no one was more aware of the dignity due to great public occasions, or could give sounder counsel in moments of private difficulty, or national catastrophe.

Unless a man is written about in the newspapers, gossiped about in Society, or has a profession—such as art, literature, politics, or the Bar—he is little known to the public, and as of necessity the intimate circle of a King’s acquaintance is limited, there are not many people outside his devoted personal friends that can realize the great character and rare qualities of the man whose death we mourn.

¹ Mrs. Hamlyn—the owner of Clovelly Court—has been my friend ever since I stayed with her sister, Lady Manners, in Leicestershire. She is a woman of great charm, humour, fidelity and originality, and I am proud to be counted among her friends.

Lord Stamfordham never cared for Society—as the word is generally interpreted but, implying the study and science of man, few could be found with a wider understanding ; and in his estimation of his fellow creatures I never knew him form a wrong judgment. He knew the precise value of all the people by whom he was surrounded, and could make a shrewd guess at the motives of the strangers whom he was obliged to interview.

Starting life as a soldier, with many of the prejudices common to this profession, his political instincts were conservatively British. But he possessed to a rare degree that freedom from self which enables men of character to add to their stature by experience ; and he would listen with attention and sympathy to the many and various people of every shade of political opinion who went to him for advice,

In spite of natural impatience, I never heard him utter a discourteous word. Nor had he any of the smugness or non-committing caution common to men who live at Court and want to impress you by their inner knowledge of the affairs of State, but feel they are debarred by professional discretion from making more than the most commonplace remarks.

Discretion is obviously necessary, but can be patronizing and pompous, and though Lord Stamfordham—from the very nature of his confidential position—knew even more than his master of all that was going on, he paid you the compliment of presuming that you also knew something, and never vowed anyone to a flattering but exaggerated secrecy. In this he showed his sagacity, as you do not get the best out of those with whom you are talking unless they think that they are trusted.

I never remember in all my long friendship ever hearing Lord Stamfordham say : “ I hope you won’t repeat what I have said.”

It was in consequence of this belief in the integrity of others, which he possessed to such a high degree himself, that he commanded the respect, and retained the confidence, of everyone who knew him. No one who ever spoke to Lord Stamfordham could fail to be impressed by his singleness of purpose, directness of nature, and immovable truthfulness and integrity.

All through history there have been flatterers, Ministers, priests, courtesans, and private prompters who have had immense influence on the affairs of State by their close contact with crowned heads ; these are called “ the power behind the throne.” Power without responsibility is not in itself an honourable attainment, and I always suspect the people to whom this phrase is applied ; but used in connexion with a Constitutional Monarchy it has a different significance. Nevertheless, if the Throne is weak, self-satisfied, or open to flattery, there is no mischief that an evil power cannot do behind it.

MORE MEMORIES

This country has been blessed in my time by Rulers on whom no suspicion can be cast of a power behind the throne. The private secretaries of Queen Victoria, King Edward, and our present Sovereign have all been men of incalculable value, and had the Tsar or the Kaiser been fortunate enough to have had men near them of the same goodness, wisdom and capacity, it is possible that we should not have lived to see the disruption of such great empires.

You want to have something noble in yourself either to proffer, or to take advice in the right way, and a courageous sense of duty should prevail over the knowledge that you are in a subservient position to enable you to tender advice. John Sterling wrote in a letter to Carlyle in 1835 : "Duty is the great witness of our personality" : and I think it was his high sense of duty that gave Lord Stamfordham his personality and power.

Ten days before he was taken ill I had a long and intimate conversation with him. He was as young, keen, handsome, impatient, and wise as he was the first day I met him.

He had a profound belief in the spirit and destiny of man, and in the ultimate scheme of God ; and his mind was informed by true religion.

* * * * *

The Prince of Wales¹ was much interested in Sir Francis Knollys's visit to Glen, and on the first occasion we met at a ball in London he asked me if I would sit out with him. I was anxious not to talk, but to dance, as I feared he would question me about his secretary's visit to Glen ; but he said it was too hot and crowded to dance, and guided me to a private sitting-room full of cushions and flowers, where I tried to divert his wandering attention from people on to politics, or any other subject—but in vain, and after a little halting conversation he looked fixedly at me and asked if I was truthful. I said that I had never had any temptation to be otherwise ; truth was not a virtue with me, but a peculiarity, and one which I had often regretted.

"In that case," he said, "you will answer my questions. Was not my secretary, Francis Knollys, in love with you ?"

Margot. "I would hardly go as far as to say that,

¹ King Edward.



Edward R. A. Ross 1903

W & D. Downey

sir. He was happy at Glen and took a passing fancy to me."

Prince of Wales. "But did he not want to marry you?"

Margot. "I don't think so."

Prince of Wales. "But he proposed to you, didn't he?"

Remembering my promise to Sir Francis at Glen not to repeat what he had said to anyone I answered:

"Never in this world!"

"Then," said the Prince, "I don't care a fig for your truthfulness, as he told me himself that he had done so!"

Margot (with some asperity). "Your secretary, sir, has every right to tell you what he likes, but I have *not*: and I will leave it to him to inform your Royal Highness in future of his private affairs."

The Prince was peeved at this retort and we left the flowered sitting-room. We had several encounters of the same sort after this as he was critical and curious, and did not approve of my intellectual friends: "I cannot bear to see that conceited prig with his arm round your waist. I suppose Liberal Members of Parliament can't dance or you would not dance with these superior persons—ha! ha!! ha!!" After a late cotillion he suggested I should accompany him to Covent Garden to see the market carts and flowers, adding that if the idea shocked me I could choose "a Soul" for a chaperon.

But King Edward had a nature that did not harbour resentment and no clouds had any permanent effect upon our friendship. He gave me a life of General Gordon in which he wrote the following inscription accompanied by a charming letter.

GORDON'S JOURNALS AT KHARTOUM

To Miss Tennant in remembrance of a gallant soldier, a true Christian and a brave and unselfish Englishman,

from

ALBERT EDWARD.

April, 1886.

MORE MEMORIES

MARLBOROUGH HOUSE,
PALM MALL, S.W.
April 19th, 1886.

MY DEAR MISS MARGOT,

Warm thanks for your very kind letter and it gives me much pleasure to hear that you were pleased with the book and inscription. I certainly *feel* every word I have written—I am so distressed to hear of your fall, and hope you will hunt no more—at any rate this season. You may rely on my not mentioning it to a soul¹—you can *always* trust me I hope. Even without a nose and lip you will not lose your personal attraction to my mind. Let me congratulate you on the birth of a nephew, and I hope that I shall have an opportunity of making your sister's acquaintance this year.

Excuse this scrawl—but I must close in haste as I am just starting for Sandringham. Good-bye and God bless you dear little Miss Margot. Soon au revoir again I hope.

Ever your sincere friend,
A. E.

When in 1908 at Biarritz my husband kissed hands, we spent many happy days together at Sandringham and at Windsor, and my husband missed no opportunity of seeing his Sovereign and informing him and his secretary (whose indiscretion I had long forgiven) of every Cabinet secret.

Edward the Seventh was a man of wisdom and discretion, who from a rare knowledge of his own limitations seldom attempted anything that he could not accomplish.

Upon one of his unofficial visits to the Kaiser at the time when the increase in the German navy was assuming formidable proportions, a State banquet was given in the King's honour and he had to respond to the toast of his health. The Kaiser, who was always jealous of the King, had made a flowery oration in which he had spoken at great length on the power that the German and British Navies combined would have on the future of the universe. One of my friends who was present told me that when King Edward rose to his feet the tension

¹ In my fall out hunting I gashed my upper lip, and broke my nose. I vowed the Prince to secrecy for fear my parents would hear of my accident and make me give up hunting at Melton.

was great. He did not allude to the British Navy, or the German estimates, but after lauding at length all that was gracious and irrelevant in the Kaiser's oration ended by saying that he, himself, had always been very fond of yachting ; and I could mention many other instances of his home-spun sagacity.

* * * * *

The last time that I saw King Edward was dining with Count Mensdorff at the Austrian Embassy when he and I were partners at bridge, playing against the late Lord Revelstoke and the Duchess of Roxburgh. The King was in excellent spirits, but when he coughed he seemed rather breathless, and though no one else agreed with me I thought him looking tired. Shortly after this, my husband went for a brief holiday on the Admiralty yacht with Mr. McKenna, the Queen went to Denmark to see her relations, and the King went to Sandringham.

When I heard that the King had contracted a chill and was returning to the Palace to see his doctors I was filled with apprehension and determined to send the Prime Minister a telegram to return at once. As I was writing the telegram, Lord Kitchener came into my Downing Street drawing-room. He had arrived early for lunch, and I told him what I was doing ; at which he said in his most abrupt manner :

“Nonsense ! You've only got to look out of the window—the flag on the Palace is not half-mast high ! ”

I did not like the brutality of his tone and turning to Mr. John Burns, who had come into the room, asked him if he did not agree with me that the King was ill. He replied he was convinced of it. Lady Frances Balfour joined us and snubbing my suggestion, said it was ridiculous of me to interfere and curtail my husband's holiday. Nevertheless, I finished writing my telegram and sent it by special messenger over to the Admiralty.

I am not going to write of those sleepless nights and anxious mornings when the whole world was waiting

with bated breath for news ; and hundreds of people of all classes were collected round the iron gates of Buckingham Palace. Had it not been for the police my motor could not have passed through the vast crowds that assembled every night when I joined them to read the doctors' bulletins. I returned to Downing Street dumb with misery and thanked God that I had sent the telegram to my husband. But though the Admiralty yacht started home the moment the telegram was deciphered, she only arrived in England in time to learn that the whole Empire was plunged into mourning. The Queen sent for her Prime Minister the moment he arrived, and took my husband to see her dead King.

I will end this account of King Edward by quoting the Prime Minister's speech delivered in the House of Commons on the 11th of May, 1910.

After extolling the manner in which by his tact and personal influence the King had assisted in the conduct of Foreign affairs he ended by saying :

At home we all recognize that above the din and the dust of our hard-fought controversies, detached from Party, attached only to the common interest, we had in him an arbiter, ripe in experience, judicial in temper, at once a reverent worshipper of our traditions, and a watchful guardian of our Constitutional liberties.

One is tempted, indeed constrained, on such an occasion as this to ask what were the qualities which enabled a man called comparatively late in life to new duties of unexampled complexity—what were the qualities which in practice proved him so admirably fitted to the task, and have given him an enduring and illustrious record among the Rulers and Governors of nations. I should be disposed to put what first sounds a commonplace, but in its persistent and unfailing exercise is one of the rarest virtues, his strong, abiding, dominating sense of public duty. King Edward, be it remembered, was a man of many and varied interests. He was a sportsman in the best sense, an ardent and discriminating Patron of the Arts. He was as well equipped as any man of his time for the give-and-take of social intercourse ; wholly free from the prejudices and narrowing rules of caste ; at home in all companies ; an enfranchised citizen of the world. To such a man, endowed as he was by nature, placed where he was by fortune and by circumstance, there was open, if he had chosen to enter it, an unlimited field for self-indul-

KINGS AND GOVERNMENTS

gence. But, sir, as everyone will acknowledge who was brought into direct contact with him in the sphere of affairs, his duty to the State always came first. In this great business community there was no better man of business ; no man by whom the humdrum obligations—punctuality, method, preciseness, and economy of time and speech—were more keenly recognized or more severely practised. I speak with the privilege of close experience when I say that wherever he was, whatever may have been his preoccupations, in the transactions of the State there were never any arrears, never any trace of confusion, and never any moment of unavoidable delay. He had in its highest and best development the genius of common sense. . . .

He loved his people at home and over the seas. Their interests were his interests, and their fame was his fame. He had no self apart from them.

I will not touch for more than a moment on more delicate and sacred ground ; on his personal charm, the warmth of his humanity, his unfailing considerateness for all who in any capacity were permitted to work for him. I will only say in this connexion that no man in our time has been more justly loved by his family and friends, and no ruler in our, or in any time, has been more sincerely true, more unswervingly loyal, and more uniformly kind to his advisers and his servants. . . . He has left to his people a memory and an example which they will never forget ; a memory of great opportunities greatly employed, and an example which the humblest of his subjects may treasure and strive to follow, of simplicity, courage, self-denial, tenacious devotion, up to the last moment of conscious life, to work, to duty, and to service.¹

¹ " Occasional Addresses, 1893-1916 " (Macmillan).

CHAPTER IX

THE COURT: THE WAR: EAST FIFE AND PAISLEY

IT was in 1885 that for the first time I was asked to a Court ball, and found myself in a glittering assemblage of Royal and distinguished persons.

I had been presented to Queen Victoria; but the fashion of the day obliged me to make so many curtsies, that after an anxious furtive stare at the Queen, I was too apprehensive about my train to observe the Princes, Princesses, or anyone very closely.

I remember my Presentation day with great vividness; more because of a remark my mother made to me than because I kissed Queen Victoria's hand.

I wore a white satin dress chosen with the greatest care by my mother, and made by Worth. It had a tight-fitting white bodice of satin cut off the shoulders, a close-fitting white satin skirt with a heavy fringe of snowdrops at the foot, and a fountain of white tulle at the back. The train was very long—of the same heavy satin—and caught up with clusters of snowdrops in unexpected places. As my dress was off the shoulders, the train was difficult to manage, and was so heavy that when I rehearsed my curtsy in my mother's bedroom before her looking-glass, it seemed to pull me off my feet.

I was rather a pretty girl before I hurt my upper lip and broke my nose in the hunting-field. I had dark curling hair—growing well out of a square forehead—expressive eyes, an insignificant mouth, a well-cut nose, and an oval face. Though short in stature, I had an active figure, and carried myself with a certain grace.

It was a favourite remark of my mother's, to say she was thankful that her daughters were not beauties, but she said it too often ; and we began to suspect that her reason for saying it was to counteract my father's impetuous admiration.

My eldest sister Posie,¹ and my second sister Chartie,² were both better looking than I was ; but my looks gave my mother a sort of anxiety. Being a great flirt herself—and a great beauty—she mistook my vitality and confidence for vanity, and as a matter of principle thought it wise to discourage me. But she need not have been afraid, as we were all too busy with life to be interested in our appearance, and when I was asked as a child if my hair curled naturally, I remember being puzzled, and saying to my nurse :

“Is my hair natural, Nannie ? ”

Whatever their age or appearance, everyone wants to look well on their Presentation day, so I dressed with extreme care. After struggling with my veil and feathers, I felt far from confident when I went into my mother's bedroom. She examined me meticulously and said :

“Your dress is not very becoming, but no one will notice you.”

My heart sank, as I only wanted her approbation, and never thought that anyone would notice me. I was not consoled by my father's praise, when after parading our trains before the servants we left for Buckingham Palace.

The Drawing Rooms of those days were formidable functions. They were held in a small room in the Palace in the mornings—a time when most women look their worst—and walking backwards after as many as six curtsies was an ordeal that few came out of with elegance.

Full of anxiety, and feeling as if a regiment of soldiers was standing on my train, I followed my mother closely, and walked towards the Queen. I remember the disappointment I felt that she was not standing up, and the

¹ Mrs. Gordon Duff.

² Lady Ribblesdale.

thrill I felt at the beauty of the Princess of Wales,¹ but walking backwards after my curtsies was occupying so much of my attention that I had no time to observe any of the Royal and distinguished persons.

Several years after this, Queen Victoria's private secretary—Sir Henry Ponsonby—told me that he had been impressed by my lovely dress, and the grace of my curtsies. (These encouraging remarks are not forgotten, nor are the disparaging ones, and I sometimes wonder if parents realize the impressionability in youth of their children.)

At the time when I was presented, Queen Victoria had dedicated herself to a perpetual mourning; and although extremely vigorous and strong, she never attended either the Concerts, or the Balls, given at the Palace. Our hosts at these functions were the Prince and Princess of Wales;² and the Princess of Wales was the *one* person that everyone wanted to see. There was no one whose reputation for beauty and graciousness in the whole of Europe could compare with hers, and as I had not been able to observe her closely on the day of my Presentation, I looked forward with eagerness to seeing her at my first Court Ball.

I do not think I am exaggerating when I say that Queen Alexandra—then the Princess of Wales—was the most beautiful woman in Europe. The perfect oval of her face, the fine brow, clean-cut nose, and dazzling complexion, were enhanced by the colour of her eyes and the radiance of a smile easily provoked in public and in private. The carriage of her little head set upon a firm white throat, and the outline of her marble shoulders, could not have failed to move the least impressionable. She had but two Royal rivals—both of them very different in appearance—one, the Empress of Austria, and the other, the Grand Duchess Serge of Russia.

¹ Queen Alexandra.

² King Edward and Queen Alexandra.

THE COURT

The Empress of Austria was a consummate horse-woman, and cared for nothing as much as fox-hunting and a life of independence. To escape the monotony and rigour of the Austrian Court she had erected for herself a private riding school, and would jump on to horses in the ring without a saddle, and with acrobatic ease. She was a friend of my sister Chartie Ribblesdale, and hunted for several winters in Cheshire with her and my brother-in-law. I heard much of her prowess in the hunting-field from Lord Spencer—the then Master of the Pytchley—but to my endless regret, I never saw her ride to hounds.

The Empress carried herself like the Commander-in-Chief of a great army, but she did not enjoy the privileges of her position ; grandeur without gaiety was not to her liking, and the contact of ordinary society bored her. The expression of her grand face was more arresting than welcoming, and it was interesting to see the distance she placed between herself and those that she was obliged to converse with.

The Grand Duchess Serge—sister of the Tsarina of Russia—had a beauty of quite another kind. When I first saw her—at a Palace ball, many years after my debut in London—I was filled with awe and admiration. Hers was a face the pathos of which could never be forgotten. Her tragic looks—as of Fate let loose—made me wonder if she was in her right place : I could more easily have visualized her on the High Altar of a Cathedral, or in a wooden shrine leading to the heights of Calvary than on the raised dais of a Palace ; and when I pranced round the ballroom with the Grand Duke Serge—a foolish looking fellow who danced like an inebriated grasshopper—I felt a profound pity for his beautiful wife.

But commanding as was the appearance of the Empress of Austria, and moving as were the looks of the Grand Duchess Serge, for youth, gaiety, and radiance, our Queen Alexandra had not a rival in the world, and all I cared

about at my first Court Ball was to be in a position to watch her.

My mother, father, and I, arrived early and climbed on to the hard red satin seats. We looked at the Duchesses on one side of the dais, and the Corps Diplomatique on the other, and listened to the band playing occasional music in the high gallery. There was a sudden silence, and we all stood up for the National Anthem. Gentlemen in waiting, holding white rods and walking backwards, came in, followed by the Prince and Princess of Wales ¹ and all the Royal family. Stepping on to the dais, the Prince took his wife's hand and with infinite grace she turned and curtsied first to the row of Ambassadors on her left, then to the Duchesses on her right, and after acknowledging the closely packed company in the centre of the ballroom, sat down beside her Prince. For grandeur, grace, and dignity, on these occasions no Monarchs in Europe could rival our Prince and Princess of Wales.

The Palace ballroom was divided by a red rope to facilitate the Court officials who were directing the dancing ; but those who arrived early enough to occupy the high seats were in as good a position as anyone else to observe what was going on, and thrilled with admiration I watched our lovely Princess in the opening quadrille moving across the long polished boards like a beautiful ship setting out to sea.

I saw no one in the ballroom except my father—an active valseur—who was likely to ask me to dance ; and when the quadrille was over, I watched with wistful interest the moderate movers trying to avoid colliding with one another to the tune of a Strauss valse. My mother was timid, and I hardly liked to leave her side, so I amused myself by observing the Cabinet Ministers and professional beauties whose photographs I had seen in the shop windows. I looked at the Indian Rajahs, with marvellous turbans, and jewels round their ankles,

¹ King Edward and Queen Alexandra.

THE COURT

and admired the ribbons and decorations on the coats of the foreign Ambassadors. Seeing that my mother and father were quite happy, I left the red seats and moved down to the floor of the ballroom. An obscure Member of Parliament asked me to dance with him and must have been surprised at the alacrity with which I complied with his request.

The ballroom had thinned out as the Prince of Wales was dancing, and my partner, who was a proficient performer, made me confident and happy. We whirled round in perfect unison over the polished floor to a valse by Waldteufel. I was wearing a black satin and tulle dress trimmed with scarlet cherries; and as most débutantes wore white, rose, or blue, my dress was conspicuous. My father had given me a row of pearls and a diamond bow brooch on the occasion of my début, and I had pinned a bunch of cherries below my bared shoulders with my new brooch. When the Prince had finished dancing, the crowd thickened, and to avoid colliding with a clumsy couple, my partner clasped me firmly to his *solitaire* and my brooch was flung off my shoulder. I did not notice this at the time, but when we stopped to the last beat of the music opposite the royal dais, Prince George¹ came up to me and gave me my brooch. I was more than grateful, and after thanking him profusely we exchanged a few sentences. He asked me if I enjoyed dancing, and if I liked riding, as he had often seen me galloping down Rotten Row. We agreed that there was nothing more pleasant than riding, and disagreed about balls. I said the few that I had been to I had enjoyed, and he said he did not care for dancing: after which I curtsied and returned to my parents.

To go to a much later date from the time of which I am writing—staying at Sandringham in December, 1911—the Queen spoke of her eldest son's² sweet and unselfish disposition. She said that he was a backward, timid boy,

¹ The King.

² Prince Eddy.

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and had been made more nervous by his father's perpetual teasing—a form of ill-judged chaff that she could not endure.

“My dear Margot,” she said with restrained emotion, “mothers understand their sons much better than their fathers do. Eddy was not handsome; and you know he was far from robust. ‘Man looketh on the countenance, but God on the heart’ is what I had engraved on his tomb.”

I was much moved, and made her write this in my Bible.

* * * * *

Queen Alexandra was a shrewd observant woman, with an excellent sense of humour. Her unfortunate deafness prevented people knowing how clever she was, and she was too keen, stubborn, and young, ever to grow up. Generous, tenacious, and amusing, her friendship was a joy in my life, and I have kept every letter she ever wrote to me. I will quote one that she wrote sending me her photograph in 1923.

SANDRINGHAM,
NORFOLK.

For my dearest Margot from her aff^{te} friend Alexandra.

“The happiness of life consists of something to do, something to love, and something to hope for.”

1923.

* * * * *

The next time I met King George to speak to was after his father had acceded to the throne, and my husband was Prime Minister. The King¹ was anxious to talk to my husband upon several matters of importance, and we were commanded to go to Sandringham.

There was a large and distinguished party staying in the house, and on the second day of our arrival we were all assembled for tea in the hall which opened from the front entrance.

¹ King Edward.

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A room which guests enter from the front door is seldom comfortable, and when I went down to tea—before the arrival of their Majesties—I examined it closely. In the yellow polished oak which decorated the walls, inferior portraits of the Royal Family, painted by Academicians, were inserted in the panels and every chair and sofa was upholstered with red and blue-striped linen to represent the Guards' colours. Before completing my examination, Queen Alexandra joined me—a vision of beauty in a violet velvet tea-gown—and we discussed the tea-party. She told me that the Prince and Princess of Wales were coming with their little son ¹ and asked me if I would sit next to him and be kind, as he was shy and nervous, and she feared that meeting the Prime Minister and other strangers would embarrass him. I was only too glad to comply with her request, as I felt a special interest in this lovely little boy. My husband was Home Secretary when he was born, and by the custom of this country, the Home Secretary is obliged to be present at the birth of the heir to the throne.²

Upon the arrival of the Prince and Princess of Wales I placed myself next to the little Prince at tea and found him modest, interested and charming. But the atmosphere of the Sandringham tea-party was not congenial for a nervous little boy. The presence of his father (King George) and his grandfather (King Edward) as well as the Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary and other men of importance, did nothing to restore his confidence. Between spurts of lively general conversation there were intervals of sudden silence which my husband bridged over with dexterity.

¹ The present Prince of Wales.

² I well remember my husband telling me of his conversation with Queen Alexandra when he and she were awaiting the birth of the present Prince of Wales. He described her grace and beauty when, standing in a white tea-gown, she held the newborn baby wrapped in flannel for her Home Secretary to kiss.

I have never known anyone who could bridge with greater ease and suggestion the gaps in conversation of either a high, or poor, standard than Henry. Silences which would have embarrassed most people stimulated him. I was getting on very well with my little Prince, but observed that he was a little shy with his father, and when I went up to dress for dinner I wondered if the habit that kings have with their heirs of a sort of boisterous chaff does not ultimately alienate them from intimacy.

Discussing the tea-party with my husband when we went to bed I asked him if he thought the Prince of Wales minded King Edward's chaff. He said that from the days of Peter the Great to the reign of Queen Victoria this had been a custom with kings. It was not his idea of family fun; nevertheless, Lord Rosebery and several fathers that he knew indulged in it. In the case of kings, he thought it probably came more from a natural ascendancy than lack of affection.

I said it was not at all easy to deflect the conversation of kings and princes, as, like other people, they wanted to be heard; and though they met everyone of fame and distinction they met with little interruption and therefore had less opportunity than ordinary people had of listening.

* * * * *

In connexion with the tea-party at Sandringham, I will quote from a passage I wrote in my diary about the first visit my husband and I paid at Windsor Castle after King Edward came to the throne (June 20, 1908).

"No one appeared to me to be at their ease in the presence of their Majesties. The fact is, if you don't keep a firm grip upon yourself on the rare occasions when you are with Kings and Princes, you notice little, enjoy nothing, and lose your individuality.

"Royal persons are divorced from the opinions of people that count, and are almost always condemned to take safe and commonplace views. To them, clever men are 'Prigs'; clever women 'too advanced';

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Liberals are 'Socialists'; the uninteresting 'Pleasant'; the interesting 'Intriguers'; and the imaginative 'Mad.' But when all this is said, our King devotes what time he does not spend upon sport and pleasure, ungrudgingly to duty. He subscribes to his cripples, rewards his sailors, reviews his soldiers, opens bridges, bazaars, hospitals, and tunnels, with enviable graciousness. He is personally fond of Henry, but is not really interested in men."¹

* * * * *

Looking back upon the many years that I have watched the movements of British politics I do not think that through all the Administrations of Gladstone, Salisbury, Rosebery, Campbell-Bannerman, Arthur Balfour, Bonar Law, Baldwin, Lloyd George, or Ramsay MacDonald, there were more problems of difficulty to solve than those that faced my husband when in 1908 he became Prime Minister. Nor could he have overcome them in the manner he did had he not been sustained by the understanding, co-operation, and affection of King Edward and King George.

King George's accession to the throne coincided with the Parliament Bill, a controversial measure of far-reaching importance which none of the Prime Ministers I have known, other than my husband, would have had the courage to put upon the Statute book.

It is not my intention to go into all the comings and goings, the endless patience, the anxious decisions, and all the hostility which this Bill aroused.² It is enough for me to say that after the short-sighted stupidity of the House of Lords in its usurpation of the rights of the

¹ This was not written of the present but the past reign, and speaking for myself I have always felt confident and happy while conversing with King George.

² On July 24, 1911, my husband was howled down in the House of Commons by Lord Hugh Cecil and Mr. F. E. Smith and never delivered his speech. It was I think printed next morning in *The Times*.

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Commons when it rejected the Budget—an affair of one year only—added to the constant rejection by the peers of Liberal measures passed by enormous majorities in the House of Commons, something had to be done to readjust the relations between the two Houses. When the crisis ultimately came, King George did what his father would have done had he been placed in a similar situation, and though both the Conservative and Labour Parties have been in power since 1911 they have done nothing to reverse the Parliament Bill.

* * * * *

It is not my purpose to deal, except in the briefest manner, with what has already been written of at immense lengths by generals, admirals, politicians, and civilians of every country ; and films, plays, and novels, are still produced to emphasize the pathos, horror, and futility of the War. Nor shall I repeat what I wrote in my Autobiography of those terrible days when a listening world watched by night and waited at dawn for news of war. I will only say here that from the month of August, 1914, till December, 1916, my husband was in the closest contact and the complete confidence of his King ; and I am not exaggerating when I say that until the day he died this confidence was never withheld from him.

The bare facts will suffice.

On Monday the 3rd of August, 1914, Sir Edward Grey made his famous speech in the House of Commons and Redmond made his moving answer ; and on the 9th of August the following message from the King was published in all the newspapers.

BUCKINGHAM PALACE,

August 9th, 1914.

You are leaving home to fight for the safety and honour of my Empire. Belgium, whose country we are pledged to defend, has been attacked, and France is about to be invaded by the same powerful foe. I have implicit confidence in you, my soldiers. Duty



"AN ASQUITH TO THE RESCUE"
War Minister (to Premier) - "Hold Tight! I'll see you through"
Reproduced by permission from 'Punch, April 8 1914

THE WAR

is your watchword, and I know your duty will be nobly done. I shall follow your every movement with the deepest interest, and mark with eager satisfaction your daily progress ; indeed your welfare will never be absent from my thoughts.

I pray God to bless you, and guard you, and bring you back victorious.

GEORGE R.I.

Sitting one morning in the drawing-room of 10, Downing Street I was listening at the open window to the military bands playing round the recruiting tents on the Horse Guards Parade when two of my most intimate women friends were shown into the room.

They were eager to tell me what they considered the duty of the Prime Minister's wife during a war which they felt convinced could only be of short duration.

They found me in a profoundly perturbed and irritable humour. My stepsons, my brothers' sons, and my sisters' sons had all joined the Army, and it was only a question of time when they would be ordered to the front.

My friends explained to me that it would be impossible for either myself or my husband to receive in Downing Street any friend of German name now that we were at war ; and thought that the wisest and most popular thing I could do would be to avoid, if not to cut them. Outraged by such a suggestion, I asked them upon what authority they based their advice ; and added that although there was no question of entertaining anyone in Downing Street at such a time, it was more than probable that the greatest moral sufferers at the moment were the Germans that lived in this country.

There was nothing too vile or too silly for people to believe. My husband had shares in Krupps' ; I was intriguing with the German Staff through my visits to German soldiers imprisoned in this country ; and from the attic to the basement, my household, my friends, and my family were all pro-Germans. When Lord Kitchener was drowned I was inundated with anonymous and

abusive letters saying that I had signalled from some secret place in the North Sea to the German submarine that was supposed to have sunk the *Hampshire*. It seems incredible that anyone could have believed that a man was in league with an enemy who had killed his eldest son,¹ shell-shocked his second,² and maimed his third.³ But the longer I live the more I perceive that there is nothing you cannot make ignorant and excited people believe ; and if our soldiers had shown the same hysteria at the front that some of my friends showed at home it is certain that the War would never have been won.

My husband had succeeded in August, 1914, in face of the greatest difficulty, in bringing the whole Empire into the War, and any criticisms of his conduct did not come from the soldiers at the front or the generals at home. But when a war is going badly the public gets impatient and, added to the denunciations of the powerful Northcliffe Press, there were unsuspected members in his Coalition Cabinet that were anxious to displace him. This will be fully dealt with when Mr. Spender's and Cyril Asquith's official life is published. The crisis of 1916 came as a shock to my husband, for up till the meeting of the Conservative Party on Sunday, December 3, 1916, he had the impression that his colleagues had confidence in his leadership, and, as events turned out, I think this was true. But the unwritten message which Mr. Bonar Law conveyed to him after the meeting ⁴ misled him ; under the impression that the Conservatives in his Coalition preferred to serve under Mr. Lloyd George's leadership he resigned.

There are some men who derive pleasure in pursuing and frustrating their opponents. They have a feeling of exhilaration in giving an enemy a bloody nose. These

¹ Raymond.

² Herbert.

³ Arthur.

⁴ Since writing this there has been a controversy over the precise message which Mr. Bonar Law delivered to my husband in the afternoon of December 3, 1916. But however unintentional, the fact remains : my husband was misled.

sort of fisticuffs were alien to my husband. He was deficient in that touch of drama which goes over the footlights and magnifies personal importance. To mollify hostility was an act he never deigned to practise.

Hazlitt writes of Sir Joshua Reynolds :

He always despised malicious reports. Nothing you could say had any effect, if he was not satisfied with himself. He had a great game to play, and only looked to the result. He had studied himself thoroughly : and, besides, had great equanimity of temper.

The same might have been written of my husband.

Nothing is rarer in politics than men of courageous judgment, dispassionate mind, and level heads, who rely upon their own capacity and are indifferent to calumny, but they have little glamour for the general public and I marvelled at the inner armour which enabled my husband to withstand the hail of bullets which wounded, but did not kill him, after his defeat in the General Election of 1918.

For thirty years he had represented East Fife in the House of Commons, but when the electors were told that he had killed their sons they turned him out, and with the help of the whole Conservative Party the Coalition was reinforced in power under the popular leadership of Mr. Lloyd George.

No one knew how to adjust himself to adverse circumstances better than my husband, and it was only when he and I were alone, and thinking aloud, that he ever alluded to the ingratitude shown to him by the Conservative Party and my fellow-countrymen.¹

* * * * *

After our defeat in East Fife we retired into private life and spent most of our time motoring, or playing with the children on the banks of the Thames at The Wharf. We paid visits to my sister, Lucy Graham Smith, my

¹ The Scottish people.

brothers, Frank and Jack, my home—Glen—the hospitable houses of friends—Mells Manor House, Munstead, Castle Howard—and in the holidays golfed together on the links that guard the lovely coast between North Berwick and Edinburgh.

The orgy of waste and incompetence, both at home and abroad, of the Coalition Government we read of in silence every morning in the daily papers.

It was not till February, 1920, that my husband decided to return to the House of Commons.

By the death of the Liberal Member there was a by-election at Paisley, a constituency which had never been known to return a Tory to Parliament—and after a not too encouraging invitation from the local Paisley Liberals my husband decided to comply with their request. Hearing that the Liberal organization had been completely neglected and that the bulk of the constituents in Paisley only cared for Mr. Lloyd George, our chances of success did not appear too rosy. Our friends were divided in their desire for my husband's return to Parliament and their fear of his defeat.

Nevertheless, we went to Paisley, and with the assistance of Vivian Phillipps (our beloved secretary), my step-daughter Violet,¹ and Mr. McNair the local Liberal agent—a man of rare energy and character—we won the most momentous by-election since Mr. Gladstone's triumph in Midlothian.

Starting in a chilly atmosphere, the enthusiasm of the Paisley electors rose to such a height that we had to have police protection after the declaration of the poll, and I was knocked on to the railway line at St. Enoch's Station by the rush of my husband's admirers seeing him off by the night train that took us to London. But it is surprising how excitement and happiness protect one, as after being pulled on to the platform by the willing

¹ Violet Bonham Carter is the finest political woman speaker I have ever heard, and rendered her father invaluable service at Paisley.



Photopress

Lord and Lady Oxford and their son, Anthony, standing at the front gate of
"The Wharf" 1923

porters I found instead of the bruises I had expected to see I had not received a single scratch.

* * * * *

I do not know if this book will be published before, or after the official Biography of my husband ; but as I am not writing either his, or my own life, I shall leave the events that followed to his biographer.

The misery, disappointment, and fatigue, of our last electoral campaign had been so great that when my stepson (General) Arthur Asquith proposed to take his father with him to the Sudan I felt nothing but gratitude and relief.

Immediately after we were beaten at Paisley the King wrote to my husband offering him a peerage.

We were alone in the library together when the King's letter arrived, and Henry was collecting books to take with him the next day to Egypt. He handed the letter to me in silence, and went on taking books from the shelves. I had tears in my eyes after reading the King's letter, but as my only wish was that neither Henry nor anyone else should know the depths of my unhappiness I returned the letter, kissed him, and left the room.

We talked till far into the night—of the children, his books, his journey, what addresses I should send my letters to, and what sort of date he thought he would be back with me ; and I was consoled when he said good night by seeing that he was looking forward to his journey with his son.

It was not till we were in the motor approaching Victoria Station the next morning that I spoke of the King's letter. I asked him if he had answered, and what he had said. He said that he had asked his Majesty's permission to postpone his reply.

Bags and boxes, and newspapers—porters, flowers, and friends, surrounded us at the station. After the guard's final flag, and a long hoarse whistle from the engine, with clouded eyes I threaded my way through the crowd to my motor.

CHAPTER X

MEN AND THEIR BOOKS

I OFTEN wish when I read the lives of notable men—whether written by themselves, or by other people—that the authors would tell us more details of their early years : the games they played indoors as well as out, the books they read and what they thought of them, and their first impressions of the famous people they met. It would be interesting to know what the great authors thought of each other's books when they first read them, and if they had any youthful preferences.

But oftener than not biographies dilate at length upon the parentage, professions, achievements and travels of their subjects, and seldom tell us of their reflections. It is true that young people do not often write letters, nor are their letters preserved ; and possibly if we read them they might be as non-conducting and dull as the letters they wrote at a later stage in their careers (some of which I could almost wish had never been published).

Nevertheless, it would interest me to know by what process, through whose influence, and in what manner the intellects of the writers of genius were developed. As a rule you only learn their reflections when they have grown up ; and of what they thought between the ages of fifteen and twenty we know little. They probably read all sorts of books between those ages, as speaking for myself, I had more time to read when I was young than I have to-day. The lasting impression made upon your mind by the books you read when you are young is a sure guide to what you will admire when you grow older, and as Wordsworth says somewhere, " We live by

admiration." To admire and to criticize are not one and the same thing, and I do not think you are ever a sound critic till you have developed the power to praise. It is more easy, than worthy, to judge a writer by his worst work.

There are certain figures that dominate the Past for us in literature, history, and politics, and no one is ever going to displace them. From early admiration you get a sense of true values, and if—as it was in my case—literature is what you first love, you get a sense of style through reading which awakens your critical faculty—without which you will never distinguish between what is fine and what is flimsy.

Style is difficult to define. It is a combination of character and ear. Without personality, a man may write with erudition and ease, but it will always remain the written word. And without ear, his writing may be of absorbing interest, but it will lack the rhythm which marks it for ever on your memory.

There is a certain order in style which gives it dignity. A chaste economy and severe restraint preclude purple patches—always a dangerous temptation for self-centred authors. Fénelon writes "*L'ordre, est ce qu'il y a de plus rare dans les opérations de l'esprit,*" and speaking for my own taste writing cannot be too lean. No one of sensitive ear will add one superfluous word to a sentence, and lack of order and restraint ruins half the books of modern authors. It is for these reasons that I define style as a combination of character and ear; or rhythm and restraint.

You can almost guess what some men were like by their style. Take for instance Sir Henry Wotton; if I had never read anything about him I feel as if I would recognize his courteous, leisured, and balanced personality. What Lytton Strachey wrote of Gibbon might have been written of Wotton: "He was the master of an inward harmony," and I cannot give a better illus-

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tration of what I mean by my definition of style than by quoting the first and last stanzas of his well-known "Character of a Happy Life" :

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will ;
Whose armour is his honest thought,
And simple truth his utmost skill !—

This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise or fear to fall :
Lord of himself, though not of lands,
And having nothing, yet hath all.

My husband said in a Presidential Address given to the English Association in 1919 :

" Style in poetry, even more than in prose, is an art, even an artifice ; it is sought out, thought out, and wrought out. It does not fetter inspiration, though you may have inspiration without it. It is both a vesture and a vehicle ; incommunicable, almost indefinable, never mistakable."

* * * * *

To turn to what is more personal. With the exception of our nursery games, such as " Grab," and " Old Maid," I never remember seeing a game of cards played at Glen. Whist was a game that we associated with dullness and old age, and bridge was unknown to us. But as the evenings were long and dark, and we preferred being upstairs together rather than downstairs with grown-up people, my sisters and I invented several games. They were not so much inventions, as adaptations, and among these was a game which is often played in country houses to-day—the game of " Clumps." We divided our company and put them into separate rooms, and one out of each clump was sent out to vie with the other as to which would guess quickest whatever subject, object, or phrase, was chosen by the remaining company. It arose out of " Twenty Questions " to which you were only allowed to answer " Yes," or " No." But this we found

limited and tedious, so instead of making our rivals guess "The roast beef of old England," "Napoleon's right eyelash," or "Noah's Ark," we puzzled them over what was abstract—such as "Silence," "Paradox," "A Contrast," or "An Interval." This lent itself to endless discussion, as everyone differed in their interpretation of what was abstract and what was concrete. I would not mention this game at all had we not taken it so seriously. I remember upon one occasion my sister Laura and I were questioning Arthur Balfour and the Archbishop of Canterbury (Randall Davidson), and in an effort to guess—what would now be considered more or less easy for a practised player—"a lost cause," we sat up till one in the morning. From constant practice we became proficient, but as many of our guests neither enjoyed, nor understood the game, we thought it advisable to invent something simpler in which everyone could join. We decided we would write about books and authors, biographies and autobiographies, and anyone who fancied it might vary their criticisms by parodies. The only one I wrote which is worth quoting is a parody written in 1886 on a Scotch Psalm.

The Lord Thou wilt and He doth
 shall—
 His chosen and His own,
 In pleasant paths them up
 He holds,
 Nor down to fall makes prone.

II

His hand against in anger moves
 Those necks in pride held stiff—
 Nor those He loves, and trusts, need they
 Fear doing well then if—

III

Who will rise up for me against
 Th' ungodly like a worm
 Who creeps until the pit he digged
 For him once to return.

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I wrote parodies of Blake, Carlyle, and Emerson, but they were not promising. I remember Harry Cust wrote a brilliant one of Browning, and Godfrey Webb amused us by Queen Victoria's diary in the Highlands. George Curzon chose for his subject Longfellow. But as some one quoted the following lines :

Then the beaver thus made answer,
Cautiously replied the beaver—
I must first consult the others,
I must ask the other beavers,

we did not think his parody was equal to his poet.

From the habit of writing hastily on books and authors, I started privately upon more ambitious literary work. I not only kept a commonplace book—with copious quotations from favourite authors—but I wrote long criticisms upon every book I read—most of which I have kept in green vellum volumes but which are not of sufficient importance to publish.

Since writing these youthful criticisms I have made studies of some of my favourite novels, biographies, and authors ; and though these will probably be of more amusement to myself than to my readers, I would like to say something about them.

Of all the great novelists I think perhaps Balzac has created in his own image the largest world for us. But it is a world of his own imagining. Like a bull in a ring he butted at the cloak as often as at the toreador, and occasionally missed them both. There is no first-rate life of Balzac in English, nor do I know of one in French, but there are many excellent studies of episodes in his life which I have learnt through discussing him with my friend Desmond MacCarthy. What puzzled Balzac's critics, was how—since he allowed himself so little time for living like other people—he was able to cram his books with so much circumstantial evidence of experience. He lived like a monk in a monastery, toiling at his books, working against time, and drenching him-

self with strong coffee to keep himself awake. He would rush out at odd hours to eat a meal or strike a bargain with an editor or publisher—often in different disguises—and then return to his writing table. How did he produce novels that deal in detail with innumerable types of human beings? When did he find time to know his barbers and dandies, bankers and farmers, misers and courtesans, small bourgeois and great ladies? Where did he meet his atheists, artists, mystics, swindlers, and criminals—his solitary oddities and his social climbers? The answer is he seldom *met*, and never *knew* them. He lived in the seclusion of a violent and inverted imagination in which he thought of himself as a man of business, a man of pleasure, a pauper, a miser, and an atheist. Although his novels appear to be the outcome of observation, they are one vast phantasmagoria—the only way in which he could satisfy his immense appetite for life. His hunger for possessions, action and success, projected itself in dreams which he transferred to paper. During those snatched intervals when he left his writing table to go out into the world he seems to have been like an owl in daylight. He was still pretending that he was one of his own characters—an adventurer with his hand upon a fortune, a popinjay with the ladies of Paris at his feet, a shopkeeper battling with bankruptcy. Practically the results were disastrous; but every disaster added vividness to his conception of character. It is told of him that he would chalk up on the bare walls of his rooms the spaces which should have been filled by the superb pictures, fine tapestries, mirrors, and valuable cabinets which he coveted.

Balzac's world has the intensity of a dream from an aching and empty stomach. Every character he drew was, as Baudelaire said, "like a gun crammed to the muzzle with will and appetite." This is why they impress us as being real, whereas although they are living and great creations, they were not created by God. He could not delineate good people, and those

he tried to draw are sentimental nonentities only fit to be gobbled up by men of appetite. In spite of a great admiration for his books—"La Cousine Bette," "Eugenie Graudet,"—and other masterpieces of fiction—I would never have chosen Balzac for a companion—nor would he have chosen me. He would have been like a bat who only comes out at night, and when we were together he would have been dreaming of Paris, or one of those quiet French provincial towns whose deceptive tranquillity hides bitter struggles, sordid jealousies, and unending intrigues. He had little sense of humour, and less of intimacy, and no conception of love except as a personal victory, or an overpowering lust. Such spirituality as he had has no wings, and seldom soars above what is vulgarly marvellous.

There is no writer to-day who can be compared in vigour and violence of imagination with Balzac, except perhaps D. H. Lawrence, but he was a great poet, and though I do not know, I doubt if he would have appreciated Balzac. They were both attracted in very different degrees to the question of sex, and "dread of decency" (to quote Leslie Hartley's review of Sinclair Lewis's "Ann Vickers") has made many of their books depressing.

It is surprising, since the question of sex dominates the destinies of half mankind, how wearisome too much dilation upon it can become. The truth is, sex should be handled like an apparel with which to drape and enshrine rather than to expose nakedness, and no author can afford to tear the draperies apart, however discerningly he may describe the undressing, without repelling fastidious readers. I admire Lawrence most when he writes either about the mysteries of the imagination, or of living human beings. When he leaves these regions, however poetically he may drape his figures with streams that tinkle, dark-scented woods, stars, moons, nymphs, and "the exotic heaviness of the honeysuckle," when he wrenches the draperies apart, the naked figure he dis-

closes has as much reality as the slowly revolving wax head in a hairdresser's window.

Beds to-day play an important part both in fiction and on the stage, and Lockhart's famous novel, "Adam Blair," which I am told shocked so many people at the time it was published, would be considered as meritorious to-day as "The Fairchild Family." My friend Edward Knoblock said of a new play which we saw one night together and in which bed played the principal part—"This play goes from bed to worse." Jules Lemaitre writes of Zola : "*dans la maternité il ne voit que l'accouchement ; dans l'amour rien que l'accouplement*," and though this is in no way applicable to Lawrence, it describes certain sorts of modern novelists.

Beyond a brief mention I do not intend to say much about Scott, Trollope, or Jane Austen, as everything that can be said and written of them has been done by great and famous writers—but to read them is like a day on the downs, or days reminiscent of Leicestershire, or spent in the beauties of the Border country. All sense of fatigue disappears when Jane Austen, with her exquisite sense of humour, unerring ear, and finished style, takes us into her elegant and forgotten world—of comedy without footlights, conduct without crime, and love without sex. The young men who played the principal parts in her novels are neither heroes, animals, nor scoundrels, and her moral imagination did not see them treating love as a laboratory experiment or an over-mastering desire. What I admire as much as anything in Jane Austen's writing is her clear, consistent and profound morality. With her it was a conviction from which she never departed. In spite of the conventions and customs by which she was surrounded—early calls on unpleasing relatives, introductions to neighbouring new-comers, and curiosity about persons of rank—she could make drama and heart-searchings out of simple situations. Whether she writes of strangers on sofas, baronets passing a window, or conversations at a concert, her wit and

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understanding immortalize every situation. She never repeats herself or labels her characters, but draws them with a surety of touch which makes them all living, meetable, lovable, laughable people, whom with half her observation we might meet and see every day.

She was above all things a consummate artist, and showed by a self-knowledge—which is rare—that she was aware of her own limitations. To leave her garden gate and write of the French Revolution or any of the world events between the year of her birth—1775—and her death—1817—would have been a mistake, and she showed her wisdom in sticking to what she called her “two inches of ivory,” as her miniatures are unlike those we see collected in vitrines—young women with hock-bottle shoulders, ebony ringlets, wax, and wooden countenances. All her paintings are portraits ; and she not only listened to everything that was said, but heard the thoughts of those who were speaking.

I do not think I can write anything better of Anthony Trollope than what Henry James wrote of him in his “Partial Portraits” :

His great, his inestimable merit was a complete appreciation of the usual. Trollope, therefore, with his eyes comfortably fixed on the familiar, the actual, was far from having invented a new category ; his distinction is that in resting just there his vision took in so much of the field. And then he *felt* all daily and immediate things as well as saw them ; felt them in a simple, direct, salubrious way, with their sadness, their gladness, their charm, their comicality, all their obvious and measurable meanings.

Of all writers Trollope seems to me to have had the most unbeglamoured knowledge of himself, and it speaks poorly for the publishers of the day that it took them so long before they estimated him at his true value. The pace at which his thoughts—(and his pen)—worked is astonishing, and though no one would place him among the great imaginative writers, he tells us in his Autobiography that he had never examined cathedrals, closes, or the clergy, before he wrote his fine and moving

masterpiece, "The Warden." The book for which he was paid the largest sum—£1,000—"Framley Parsonage," was written in 1859 at the request of Thackeray, who was then editor of the *Cornhill Magazine*. This is what he says of his "Framley Parsonage":

The story was thoroughly English. There was a little fox-hunting and a little tuft-hunting, some Christian virtue and some Christian cant. There was no heroism and no villainy. There was much Church, but more love-making. And it was downright honest love—in which there was no pretence on the part of the lady that she was too ethereal to be fond of a man, no half-and-half inclination on the part of the man. . . . Each of them longed for the other, and they were not ashamed to say so.

Trollope writes in his Autobiography that he considered "Pride and Prejudice" the best novel written in the English language, and though very different in style and sense of humour I can see why he admires Jane Austen. They had something of the same moral ambition. He says:

I have always desired to "hew out some lump of the earth," and to make men and women walk upon it just as they do here among us—with not more of excellence nor with exaggerated baseness—so that my readers might recognize human beings like to themselves, and not feel themselves to be carried away among gods or demons. If I could do this, then I thought I might succeed in impregnating the mind of the novel-reader with a feeling that honesty is the best policy; that truth prevails while falsehood fails; that a girl will be loved as she is pure, and sweet, and unselfish; that a man will be honoured as he is true, and honest, and brave of heart; that things meanly done are ugly and odious, and things nobly done beautiful and gracious.

Among all Sir Walter Scott's novels the three that I liked best were, "The Bride of Lammermuir," "The Antiquary," and "The Heart of Midlothian"; and no short story has ever surpassed "The Two Drovers" for drama and pathos. It is a long time since I read these moving narratives, but they are enshrined in my heart as immovably as my inner vision of the Glen moors, and

the beauty of the Border ballads which were sung to me when I was a child. Just as I regret not having read Dickens at the proper age I am sorry for those who have never read Sir Walter Scott's novels, as in spite of hastiness of structure, looseness in composition, and length in getting his story under way, he is a great novelist. Where I find he fails is in his heroines; they seem somewhat stilted. Even Diana Vernon—one of his most fascinating females—refuses a proposal of marriage in these terms: "This is folly, this is madness. Hear me, sir; and curb this unmanly burst of passion. . . . To me these raptures are misapplied—they only serve to prove a further necessity for your departure, and that without delay."

But however high upon their shelves modern readers may put Scott's novels, there will always be some one to take them down again. Nothing that Scott has ever written is as great as what he *was*. When he was dying he said to his friend Lockhart: "I may have but a minute to speak to you. My dear, be a good man—be virtuous, be religious, be a good man. Nothing else will give you comfort when you come to lie here."

The finest epitaph¹ written of Sir Walter Scott, or of any other famous author, was what I read somewhere the other day: "The whole world was by his bedside when he died."

The two greatest biographies that I have ever read—Lockhart's "Scott" and Boswell's "Johnson"—are both about the men I would most like to have met. Even if there had been no Boswell, every line that Dr. Johnson wrote is stamped by his vigorous common sense, and gigantic personality. I do not think in the whole history of literature an author's character and intellect will ever stand out more distinctly. By all accounts his brilliant biographer—Boswell—gossiped, made love, and got tipsy, and I only wish there were more biographers who gossiped, made love, and got tipsy, if they could make

¹ I do not know who wrote this.

known to us with the same accuracy, intimacy, and affection the men of whom they write.

Were I to select the best biography written in my lifetime I would choose Purcell's "Life of Manning." It is of absorbing interest, and very significant from a Scotch Presbyterian point of view. But though I know nothing of Purcell, it is evident that he chose for his portrait a man that he did not care for ; and I doubt if anyone is a fair judge of those they either like too much, or like too little. The book pleased Protestants, but offended Roman Catholics, and was hastily suppressed¹—but not before the literary world had read it. It is a devastating exposure of clerical clashes, personal animosities, and frustrated ambitions. It would be interesting to know what induced Manning to leave all his private papers to Purcell, but it was fortunate for us that he was so misguided.

Could I have chosen a career for myself in life I would like to have been an author ; for though politics have always been an affair of the heart with me, I have seen no woman who has made a name for herself in the House of Commons. They are either long and dull, or cheap and pert, and the only woman that I can listen to with any pleasure upon public affairs is my step-daughter, Violet Bonham Carter. I would like to have been an author, as I cannot imagine anything more satisfying than to have written a fine life of a great man.

To write biography is an awkward ambition and presents perplexing problems ; as if you write upon someone who interests the public and has recently died, you cannot tell the truth without offending living relatives ; and if you write of someone who died long ago, few will read your book. I know from personal experience how much death either stimulates the conscience, or obscures the memory, and men and women who were not loved

¹ I would never suppress a book which criticized the faults of the Church of England ; on the contrary, I would welcome it.

in their lifetime become idols after they are dead. I remember my sister Chartie Ribblesdale saying how much she disliked "brides in Heaven." It is a right instinct to resent criticisms passed upon those who cannot reply to them; nevertheless, I prefer the truth, as I think indiscriminate praise to gratify relations is oftener than not apt to bury the object of their adulation. It cannot be right to hurt anyone's feelings, and my worst enemy could not accuse me of spitefulness. (I would not consciously hurt a fly.) But it is a difficult question whether you are to expose yourself to a criticism of callousness, or write the truth as you see it. (I would not go as far as Samuel Butler, who says you should know neither self, nor friend, nor foe, but in the interests of truth attack all equally.)

I have no outstanding gift for writing, or I would long since have made a fortune. I began too late in life to earn either money, or reputation; but when we left 10, Downing Street we were not rich, and as I had had no experience of "reduced circumstances" I was urged to write. Several of my friends—John Morley, Arthur Balfour, Jowett, J. A. Symonds and my husband—thought that I should write; and if the infinite capacity for taking pains is a sign of genius, I am a genius! No one has ever taken more trouble than I have to write readably. (I never write with my pen in my cheek, as my friend Edward Knoblock said of me.)

When I published my Autobiography it was serialized in the *Sunday Times*. There was such an outcry against it that even my friends kept the praise they had privately expressed to me in cold storage. "Give us Barabbas!" is a cry that is as common to-day as it was in the days of the Crucifixion; and if ever I preached a sermon it is the text I would choose. What a few unthinking men shout is taken up by others, and I have long ceased to depend upon my friends, or upon anyone else for public support. But I have lived long enough to read such insincere and misleading eulogies on those that I have

known intimately that I must confess I am not a good judge of the etiquette of biography. You either write about a man or you do not, and I am grateful to anyone who can tell me anything of the man himself rather than read a full-dress, full-length portrait which has been influenced either by fear of living relations, private friends, or public opinion. Milton remarks: "The public are owls, cuckoos, asses, apes, and dogs"; and I hope when I die if anybody writes anything about me (which is not likely!) that none of my friends or relations will send letters of protest to the writers accusing them of lack of loyalty and affection, or saying that I have been insufficiently praised. If I can "get through"—as the spookists allege—there is nothing that would annoy me more.

There are other difficulties in writing a biography—of a less personal nature—which my friends Cyril Radcliffe and Roderick Meiklejohn have pointed out to me, and for which I owe them a debt of gratitude. Cyril Radcliffe writes: "The great biographies—of which there are few—are unlike any other form of literature in that they require genius in the sitter, and genius in the artist." Sir Roderick Meiklejohn gives me a list of the great biographies, some of which I have not read. For instance, Cavendish's "Wolsey," and Stanley's "Dr. Arnold," but I have read the others on his list (Southey's "Nelson," Carlyle's "Stirling," Hogg's "Shelley," Lewes's "Goethe," Forster's "Oliver Goldsmith," Walton's lives, Lockhart's "Scott" and Boswell's "Johnson"). Some sitters have had more genius than their painters, and some of the artists more genius than their sitters. All the great artists in portraying their sitters have betrayed something of themselves; but the betrayal of a biographer should be unconscious, unpremeditated, and with no ulterior motive. He should be more eager to explore his subject than to express his opinions, or he will cease to make a biography and end by making a tract. Nevertheless, an author should have a key to his mind, as most readers,

however interested in the subject, like to know something about the writer.

There is nothing more subtle than the relationship between writers and readers, and like most relationships there are various methods of approach. Speaking for myself, I like the relationship to be distant, and restrained ; I do not want to be apostrophized—to be talked to, and at ; it checks the current of what is said and disturbs me (though some of the greatest writers indulge in it). But while resenting familiarity, I am pleased to be introduced, and this introduction can only be achieved by the writer giving you the key to his mind. I have sometimes been disillusioned when after turning the key I find it has unlocked the soul of a vain and self-centred person who by his comments and criticisms prove him to be unworthy of the grandeur of the character he is portraying. In his desire to be epigrammatic and original he becomes personal and pert and lacks the reverence, restraint, and imaginative insight which might otherwise have made his book immortal. Even the greatest talent must be applied with discretion, and under the influence of the late brilliant writer—Mr. Lytton Strachey—there is a tendency in the biographers of to-day to emulate his rare wit without appreciating his literary distinction. Readers do not establish intimate relationships with authors who are too clever. It is curious how the moment you feel at ease, and in sympathy with the writers of great lives, you can forgive yourself for being in disagreement with them. Nothing but love for Dr. Johnson would enable us to forgive some of his fantastic judgments in his “Lives of the Poets”—his opinion of the poem “Lycidas”—“easy, vulgar, and therefore disgusting,” or of Gray, in whom he could find nothing but “glittering accumulations of ungraceful ornaments.” Were such remarks made by any other critic, we would throw the book out of the window.

We have all read lives of men that we have loved and

known in our lifetime, which so far from bringing them vividly before us have cremated them. What the world in general wants to know is how some notable person talked, ate, drank, looked, and loved. As most lives are much too long—and there are a great many books I hope to read—I only want to know what the man was really *like*. Facts, such as birth, education, profession, marriage, and death, however copiously and conscientiously catalogued, will never quicken the dead. Though they appeal to a certain sort of mind in the same manner as measurements, monuments, and statistics, they remain facts, and their only value is for those who depend for their knowledge upon a literary “Who’s Who.” The great ones of the earth must not be mere names—such as Grecian heroes, Roman conquerors, Spartan soldiers, or film stars—they must be friends; men who we feel are akin to ourselves, and who share something of our daily experiences. The smallest details of their private lives are of more importance than the biggest battles, the passing of the Reform Bill, or the discovery of America. We remember and enjoy what we learnt when we were children—Sir Walter Raleigh and the cloak, Queen Elizabeth and the ring, Bruce and the spider, and the ceremonies and clothes of the early Druids. Probably the most popular form of biography will always be the tale of Alfred and the cakes which, like the tales in the Old Testament, can be told over, and over, and over again.

CHAPTER XI

REFLECTIONS ON RELIGION

GREAT as is mankind in talent, thought, invention, science, physical beauty, spiritual ambition, courage and devotion, it is clear to me that the human race as we know it is unfinished. Believing, as I do, in an *ordered* and not a haphazard scheme revealed by the Universe (or by a simpler word—*God*), I think we have been given everything except the power either spiritual or intellectual to understand the purpose for which we have been created. And yet from the first days of our existence we are drawn towards what we have been denied. You see babies of two years old when told to put their hands together and thank God for their happy day, to bless their parents, and to make them good, obey with shut eyes and bowed heads : and though their youthful “*Amens*” are often emphatic, as they grow older, their prayers grow longer, and they would not like to miss saying them either to their nannie, their mother, or themselves.

An early consciousness of the promise of a future goal is discouraged in certain natures by the lack of guidance with which this promise is accompanied, and when they are freed from the restrictions of their religious training, young people feel no particular desire to return to them. They start by being sensitively aware of the “desperate seriousness of the moral choice,” and the infinite difference between right and wrong ; but the world gradually closes in upon them : material failure or success urges them forward, and with the hustle, the hazards, and the excitement of life, their

spiritual reflections recede. Now and then these are reawakened by something inspiring that they read, or when they are gathered together at the memorial service of someone they have cared for ; or possibly when revisiting some lonely country scene which has kept the secret of their early love. But it has always been profoundly discouraging to me to see men and women that I have known, who have started life with an unquestioning trust in a God they cannot know, and intense reverence for every manifestation of Him, gradually harden into complete indifference. They acquiesce, rather than believe, in religious observances, and go to church merely as an example to their servants. And yet the least religious of us are aware of a certain interference in our ambitions, our loves, our intentions, and our comings and goings ; and this interference—more apprehended than understood—we feel does not always come from man. “ And thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left ” (Isaiah xxx. 21).

So mysterious is life, that those who falter in faith might almost say that man was kinder to them than God—as at any rate men more or less understand each other's purpose, but they are left groping in the dark as to what God's is. This is why I think we are unfinished, and in our quest for Truth discover sooner or later that the greatest Truth can *never* be revealed to us through our intellect. We cannot pierce the silence that screens us from a mysterious conception, and are not content to believe that “ now we see through a glass darkly : but then face to face.”

There is nothing more perplexing in life than to know at what point you should surrender your intellect to your faith. Complete surrender such as the Roman Catholics practise, leads to abuses which turn service into servility, and are repellent to the Protestant mind. It would almost seem as if the priests encouraged superstition so as to

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keep their sway over ignorant men. Voltaire's life's work was not fighting Christianity, it was fighting superstition.

When I was watching the endless pilgrimage of poor people who visited the lonely chapel of Notre-Dame de Vie near Cannes on Easter Monday,¹ I asked one of them what the meaning of the Fête was. He answered : "The Holy Virgin blesses us on three days in the year from this chapel ; she leaves the altar after lunch."

The words which Milton puts into the mouth of the fallen angel that foretells the doom that awaits those who are alienated from God are infinitely haunting and pathetic :

And that must end us, that must be our cure,
To be no more ; sad cure : for who could lose,
Though full of pain, this intellectual being,
Those thoughts that wander through eternity,
To perish rather, swallowed up and lost
In the wide womb of uncreated Night,
Devoid of sense and motion ?

How difficult to realize that our sojourn in this world is only a preparation for the next, and that we are but part of a chain that links us to what is of all things the most incomprehensible—Immortality.

Though by nature sensitively religious and brought up in the rigour of the Scottish Church, we never believed that a God of love would permit of eternal damnation ; and Hell,² with its barbarous purpose of torture and revenge played no part in our religious reflections. What sort of Heaven would it be that was oblivious to such suffering ? And if Christ died to save sinners from eternal damnation His death was a failure. After much thought on the origin of evil I wrote in my Diary :

"You might as well try and find a fox in an omnibus as find God by your reason," and I have not altered this opinion. The pursuit of God—or by whatever name you may call the fire within us—is the mainspring of all

¹ Easter Monday, 1932.

² It is recorded, I think, of Luther, that when asked if he believed in Hell, he said : "Yes ; but it is empty."

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human endeavour but it can only be undertaken by the Spirit, and not the mind.

We ask ourselves what is the Spirit which is of greater importance than the mind—and how are we to further it? It is certain that we shall not find it through theology. There is no relation between religion—as I understand it—and theology. One is the romance, fervour, and adventure of the soul trying to find God; the other the account of famous saints, various creeds, superstitions, apostles, and Divines; and the history of the development of the Church. For the purpose of ecclesiastical historians and clerical examinations it is important to learn theology, but it has no bearing on our innermost reflections, and can never be inspiring for the teaching of life. The study of the punctual Earth with her inaccessible hills, unanswering seas, and protecting downs will bring us closer to the glories of God than any dusty pursuit of theology.

The power to love what is purely abstract is given to few. We know nothing about God, and all we are taught from pulpits blurs our vision, and makes Him remote, and ultimately dull. Many of us lose the habit of reading the Bible, and the dramatic accounts of the creation of the universe, the fall of man, Noah's ark, Daniel's den of lions, Jonah's whale, and other stories in the Old Testament fade into fiction. The story of Adam and Eve becomes mere tapestry, and after the early ecstasy of our religious awakening has been dimmed by what we hear every Sunday from the pulpit we lose the significance of symbols in our suspicion of fables.

Oh threats of Hell and Hopes of Paradise !
One thing at least is certain—*This* Life flies ;
One thing is certain and the rest is Lies ;
The Flower that once has blown for ever dies.

Strange is it not? that of the myriads who
Before us pass'd the door of darkness through,
Not one returns to tell us of the Road,
Which to discover we must travel too.

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I sent my Soul through the Invisible,
Some letter of that After-life to spell :
And by and by my Soul returned to me,
And answered " I Myself am Heav'n and Hell."

Oh, Thou, who did'st with pitfall and with gin
Beset the Road I was to wander in,
Thou wilt not with Predestined Evil round
Enmesh, and then impute my Fall to Sin !

Oh, Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make
And ev'n with Paradise devise the Snake :
For all the sin wherewith the Face of Man
Is blacken'd—Man's forgiveness give—and take !

Lines such as these haunt and depress us, and some of the most relevant, modern, and inspiring sayings to be found in Job, the Psalms, Isaiah, and Jeremiah are looked upon by doubters as merely fascinating literature.

There is only One Interpreter that can bring us back to our early faith, and that is Christ. Christianity is not credulity, it is common sense, and we are all candidates on this earth for the fellowship of our Lord. Countless men and women of the highest intelligence throughout all ages have found their lives hidden in Christ's. But is it so to-day ?

The Church has departed so far from Christ's teaching that it has alienated many common as well as thoughtful people. Indeed, I sometimes think that the only thing that stands between us and true religion is the Church. I know this is an opinion that will be hotly contested by a mass of educated and uneducated people. The Church has been the mainstay of their lives, and the rhythm of saying prayers twice every Sunday has exonerated them from repeating them for the rest of the week. I have known men and women whose daily lives were completely divorced from their Sunday religion ; and churches in London and the country which were crowded because the parson read distinctly and told the congregation homely truths, permanently emptied by men who

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mumbled and missed the message that Christ sacrificed His life to deliver the world.

Some of us have lived to see the most savage, futile and terrible war ever waged, and during those years what did the Church do to help us? Those who said that we should treat the German prisoners as our guests, or state our ultimate aims so as to check the useless slaughter of the youth of our country,¹ were hounded out of public life, and innocent men of German name whose sons had been killed in the War were driven into penury or asylums. Yet I never heard a word of protest from any pulpit. All I heard was the same smug confidence in the righteousness of our cause, and the same prayers offered up for victory that were doubtless said by all those who were fighting against us.

There was only one thing which *no* one had the courage to say—which brings me back to the failure of the Church and the ultimate answer to those who from perplexity and disappointment say, "There is no God."

What differentiated Christ from all other famous spiritual teachers was His belief in the power of Love. This inspired the greatest of all great sayings, "Love your enemies." Did any of us hear this quoted from a single pulpit during the War? . . .

There was no love in the War, and less in the Peace and at the moment of writing—Easter, 1932—we are observing the whole civilized world held up by Greed, Cowardice, Godlessness, Hate and Fear.

There is no great preacher in any church to-day to remind us that we are enjoined to forgive our debtors or to love our enemy: he might even be less hazardous, and take for his text (Phil. iv, verse 5): "Let your moderation be known unto all men"; but if he did, he doubtless knows he would find few listeners.

It is not often that you can say a political conviction coincides with a religious belief; but I think to look upon foreigners as enemies and try and draw a tight

¹ See Lord Lansdowne's letter, page 188.

string round ourselves and our possessions to keep them out, is not only *profoundly* anti-Christ but contrary to all wisdom. This, however, is the aim of the Protectionists, and the ideal which our present National Government has been inspired to pursue.

It seems incredible to me that because we have had several years of diminishing prosperity and bad trade—for which successive Governments have been largely to blame—that we should reverse all that has made us a trusted, generous, and religious nation.

The decline and fall of the United States has done nothing to convert me to the benefits of Protection ; and the more I see of the feverish competition for what is purely material, the more I am amazed at the blindness of heart which is prompting us to join in this competition.

Liberalism and Free Trade are not policies, they are an attitude of mind ; and if Christ were to come down upon earth to-day I am certain He would not say, "Enrich yourselves at the expense of your neighbour ; and if all bargaining fails, you must threaten those who threaten you."

But I have strayed from the purpose of this chapter which is not to denounce any political persuasion. All I aspire to do is to examine some of the religious perplexities before which our intelligence quails.

Some of us are born unconsciously nearer God than others, and have always realized that we not only have to die, but from the day of our birth are dying, and I wonder if the shortness of the distance will make Death any easier.

I have heard people *say* they would not mind dying, but, writing from personal experience, I have never seen anyone who did not mind passionately when they realized that death was near.

The physical torture of bearing children has been nothing in my life in comparison with the anguish I have suffered watching those I love die. Had they been

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of great age or in continuous pain it would have been different ; but it was not so, and I have never seen a happy death-bed. Speaking for myself, I could never pray to be delivered from sudden death. It is how you *live*, and not how you *die* that counts, and sudden deaths are only sad for those who are left. It is not *dying*, but *living*, that is a preparation for Death.

There have been many fine poems and sayings written upon Death. Christina Rossetti writes :

O Earth, lie heavily upon her eyes ;
Seal her sweet eyes weary of watching, Earth ;
Lie close around her ; leave no room for mirth
With its harsh laughter, nor for sound of sighs.

She hath no questions, she hath no replies,
Hushed in and curtained with a blessed dearth
Of all that irked her from the hour of birth ;
With stillness that is almost Paradise.

Darkness more clear than noonday holdeth her,
Silence more musical than any song ;
Even her very heart has ceased to stir :
Until the morning of Eternity
Her rest shall not begin nor end, but be ;
And when she wakes she will not think it long.

But when you are wide-eyed—fearing, yet yearning for the dawn—these sayings are in your head and do not touch your heart. You dread the remembrance of : “ I am in the way to study a long silence,” as how can you tell if “ the long silence ” which separates you from your love will ever be broken ? All you know is that the emotion of a great love can never be lost.

“ The once is for ever.”

* * * * *

The only time I have not rebelled against Death was when I saw a man of perfect intellectual mastery, persistent vitality, and interest in all that is best in life, suddenly lose them. And when my husband addressed

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a political meeting in his waking dreams, and slowly turned to me and said :

“ They have come to take me away from you . . . you are Margot Tennant and you won’t let them take me,” and broke a long silence by saying :

“ Kneel down beside me . . . do you see all those people kneeling on the open road ? . . . they are on their way to the Calvary. Look at the crowd !—they are all praying.”

I joined his dreams, and ceased to rebel.

CHAPTER XII

MORE OR LESS ABOUT MYSELF

IN "Life and Habit," Samuel Butler wrote :

A creature's past selves live in him at this moment with the accumulated life of centuries. "Do this, *this*, **THIS** !—which we too have done and found our profit in it,"—cry the souls of his forefathers within him. Faint are the far ones, coming and going as the sound of bells, wafted on to a high mountain : loud and clear are the near ones, urgent as an alarm of fire : "*Withhold* !" cry some : "Go on boldly !" cry others. . . . Our former selves fight within us and wrangle for possession.

This saying fills the mind with thoughts. What are these selves within us ? . . . whence do they come ? . . . to where will they urge us ? . . . and how, among so many, are we to distinguish the *one* that should win ?

* * * * *

No one is likely to write a biography of me—but, when I die, someone is sure to write something about me in *The Times* because I was the wife of the Prime Minister who guided this country through times of historic difficulty.

But obituary notices, even when written beforehand, are misleading. If you are well known, it is the duty of the journalist and not of the friend, to write them ; and I never read anything written by a journalist upon a famous person that I have known that does not follow rumour. If you are *less* well known, your friends will initial letters of praise to the Press which will be equally misleading. United by a common sorrow—although they may hold a pen in their hand—they are still watching the earth thrown into the grave, and listening to the

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whisper of life that sighs from the lovely flowers surrounding your coffin. It is not silence, but stillness, when Death comes, that hushes criticism from those who knew us ; and which of us would value the praise of strangers ? For me, it would be like the grief of mechanical mourners at an Oriental funeral, where the corpse is so friendless that the bier is accompanied by the howls of hired women.

I want no hired mourners, no Press praise : nor does it much matter what people say of us when we are dead ; all that matters is that those who have for a brief moment interested the public, should be known as they truly were. Once you are compelled—either by chance, destiny, or marriage—to step out of the reserve of private life, you do not belong entirely to your friends or to your relations : and a writer should not be reticent if he wishes to be readable.

When I made up my mind that I would forestall both friends and pressmen by writing something about myself in this book, I asked Lord Middleton—as my oldest friend—if he would put on paper the impression we made upon him after his first visit to Glen. This is what he wrote in 1931.

THE GLEN IN 1880

Early impressions of people whom one afterwards learns to know intimately, are often misleading ; but as I was, I believe, the first to visit “ The Glen ”—of the large body of friends who afterwards congregated at that centre of enjoyment—there is some point in saying that I felt the same atmosphere in October, 1880, as that which made it famous for so many years. I was staying with Lord Reay—a cultivated Dutchman who had inherited a Scotch title and afterwards became Governor of Bombay. As an admirer of Mr. Gladstone, he wished, as he told me, to pay a civility to a Liberal supporter, Sir Charles Tennant, a successful Glasgow business man who had recently purchased this beautiful property.

As the youngest Conservative Member of Parliament, I neither expected a congenial visit, nor felt sure of a welcome ; but Lord Reay thought a guest should accompany his host, and after many miles in a high dogcart, I found myself before a substantial house in the Border country. All the men being out shooting, the luncheon-table was somewhat uninspiring, till two girls of sixteen and seventeen dashed into the room and turned a mill-pond into a whirlpool. The eldest, Laura—afterwards married to Alfred Lyttelton—then, as throughout her brief life, could neither bear to see a party dull, nor any member of it shut out from whatever was of interest. Her existence was a standing answer to the scriptural query : “ And who is my neighbour ? ” She had a fund of sympathy and charm which inspired everyone within her reach to be at their best.

Margot made a wonderful complement to Laura. From her earliest days she dashed into discussion, with confident criticism and challenging assertion. Within a few minutes of our introduction she was rallying Lord Reay on his dogcart, and myself on being engaged to be married. Inviting me after luncheon to their private sitting-room—called the Doo-cot—the two girls took me over fences till my brain reeled. Had I read this book ? Had I heard that Opera ? Why was I a Tory ? Why not remain at Glen as I was now there, instead of keeping my other engagements ?—and the like, till I was forced away, with pledges of undying friendship, which, unlike most of such hasty ebullitions, were kept.

I wrote that night to my fiancée ¹ that I had met the two most remarkable girls in their teens I had ever seen.

The estimate was not faulty. Many people have had great personal success and have galvanized a large circle of friends. Hardly any, in my knowledge, have succeeded like Laura and Margot in blending statesmen, athletes, high society, and personal friends—often of humble origin—in the same circle, with complete sang-

¹ Lady Hilda Charteris.

froid on their part and appreciation on that of their guests. Men of mark like Mr. Gladstone, Lord Rosebery, Lord Spencer, or Arthur Balfour, might be found happily entertained by some ardent golfer or fine horseman ; and sometimes by an obscure relative. The fact that they interested the Tennants was a sufficient passport.

The feat was the more remarkable since Sir Charles Tennant—one of the kindest and most generous of men—had had little social experience in earlier life, and Lady Tennant by no means always knew who was sitting at her own table.

But at Glen, and 40, Grosvenor Square, for the decade which followed the launch of this remarkable couple in London Society, some of the best talkers in London gathered together ; not a few important political difficulties were resolved ; and, rarest of all, friends without an invitation were welcomed. Alfred Lyttelton truly said at this period that whether a Royal party was given, or the crossing-sweeper gave a spread for his friends, the first object was to secure Margot Tennant as a guest.

It is a long cry from 1880 to 1931. The majority of girls now run their own lives and their own society. I sometimes wish that the younger generation could realize with what trouble the foundations were laid on which they try to build so independently. If they did, they would assuredly spare a grateful and perhaps admiring thought for those two pioneers who in sport, society, and country-house life, defied all the conventions of their time (when such efforts cost something), and “got away with it.”

Possibly those who class social conventions with the marriage tie as “*vieux jeu*,” will realize in the long run less of romance and adventure than the followers of Margot Tennant in the much derided “Victorian Era.”

MIDDLETON.

June, 1931.

* * * * *

I will add to this two fortunes that were told me—one

when I was a girl, and the other after I was married. Laura and I though not superstitious, were full of curiosity. We never went to a fair without going into the tent where fortunes were told ; and now and then the results were curious. The lines in hands, the fall of cards, or deciphering character by handwriting, though often perverse, always interested us.

When I was in Paris with my father and mother in 1889 an American lady—Mrs. Moore—gave an afternoon dance to which Lady de Grey, Princess Daisy of Pless, Ava—Lady Ribblesdale—myself, and several men and women of fashion were invited. After a sumptuous tea—and what would now be called “a cabaret”—Mrs. Moore announced that we were all to sit round her ball-room as a famous fortune-teller had arrived from Vienna to tell us our past and future by the lines on our hands. Exhausted from dancing and the extreme heat, we were only too willing to obey. The door opened, and a deformed, sinister-looking woman—a little higher than a tennis net—came into the room dressed in a dirty black merino shawl and trailing black petticoats. Mrs. Moore asked her to choose which of us she would take first into an adjoining room to examine our hands. She peered at all of us in turn out of sloe-black eyes set wide apart in a face pitted with the scars of small-pox. She stopped in front of me and in a peculiar accent and clear low voice said : “You come along ; and say nothing if you please.” When we were alone, I said I would of course obey her, but wanted to know if it was anything in my face that had made her choose me. “Oh ! no,” she said, “it is not people’s faces, but their hands which interest me ; and yours are fine, square, and strikingly powerful.”

We sat down facing each other, and after scrutinizing both my hands she took the left in her bony fingers and said that I was much troubled over an admirer of little significance who had gained my heart but would never guide my life.

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"If I did not see that you were to have five children I should say you would be killed in 1893—how?—I cannot tell, but you will lie on your back for a long time. Courage and audacity will pull you through."

She went on to tell me that in spite of lovers, I would marry a famous and remarkable man. She could not say if he would be a doctor, a preacher, an author, or a man of science ; but he would be "cheered through the streets till he died." She could tell me nothing about my own five children but I would have the charge of others of whom some would give me trouble. She ended by saying that if I had the will, character, and health, I might become famous. But she told me that I lacked discipline ; and my nerves and emotions were so sensitive and incalculable, that I would pass through troubled waters which might easily overwhelm me.

"You have too few skins, and must study your health ; as later in life you will suffer from nerves and rheumatism."

As I was absorbed by my love for Peter Flower and knew no famous doctor, author, preacher, or man of science, her prognostications about my future husband seemed fantastic ; but to have five children of my own, and the charge of others, excited my imagination. As I was never likely to be a stepmother, whose children was I to take charge of?—and what nonsense to say I would suffer from nerves and rheumatism !—I was strong and active, and did not know the meaning of the word "nerves," much less "rheumatism." Fortune-tellers were foolish, and no sensible person should be influenced by them. But when I fractured my skull over timber hunting in Leicestershire in 1893, and after my third confinement, my doctor—Sir John Williams—told me that my nervous system was unreliable, that I should study my health, as no doctor would be of much use to me, and that I was never to sleep in linen sheets, I remembered the Viennese fortune-teller.

The second fortune that I was told was by a famous

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French expert in handwriting that my son-in-law—Prince Antoine Bibesco¹—sent me.

I will give it in French, as those who know the language will understand it, and those who do not, will miss nothing.

J. CRÉPIEUX-JAMIN

À BOIS D'ENNEBOURG

22 *Juillet*, 1927.

PAR MARTAINVILLE

CHER MONSIEUR,

Voici le portrait que m'inspire cette très intéressante écriture. Et voici la définition graphique sur laquelle je me base.

La grande dominante, est l'irrégularité en tout, signe capital de sensibilité et d'intelligence.

Puis, sur le 1^{er} plan : écriture-spontanée, rapide, mouvementée, simplifiée, espacée.

Sur le second plan : écriture-surélevée lancée.

Votre cordialement dévouée

CRÉPIEUX-JAMIN.

Sur une lettre signée M., datée de "The Warf," Sutton Courtney, Berks.

C'est une nature très riche des qualités les plus diverses et franchement représentative du tempérament nerveux. Intelligence très vive et sensibilité des plus développées ; voilà le milieu dans lequel évoluent ses manières d'être.

Son intelligence a été affinée grâce à une culture intense mais qui ne semble pas très disciplinée. C'est que ses qualités sont excessives et effervescentes ; elle a trop de vie, si l'on peut dire, et cela nuit à la continuité et à la sûreté de ses efforts. Elle possède quelques freins, toutefois la sagesse, pour se développer réclame plus de calme. Ici, nous trouvons une ardeur, une fougue entraînant, que ont bien leur vertu particulière, mais qui seraient encore plus précieuses si l'agitation ne s'y mêlait pas.

On voit déjà que cette organisation n'est pas banale. Il est impossible à M^e X de passer inaperçue avec cette mentalité là ; non seulement parce que sa faculté compréhensive force l'attention, mais encore est mise en relief par son activité incessante. Elle est mobile, remuante, et curieuse de tout, sans souci de contemplative ; c'est la

¹ Had my son-in-law Antoine been compelled to earn his living, he has enough brains and ability to have made fame and fortune in any walk of life. He is handsome and kind, and my relation to him is not that which is usually connected with mothers-in-law.

nature en action, rayonnante et vibrante. Il faut être nerveux soi-même pour savoir, ou mieux pour deviner, à peu près, ce qui se passe dans un tel esprit : les joies infinies de l'intelligence ; la plénitude des sentiments ; le bonheur des hautes intuitions, les trouvailles subtiles et pénétrantes. Mais aussi l'énervement causé par la sottise ; l'impatience et les froissements produits par une trop grande délicatesse ; les inquiétudes et les anxiétés d'une âme trop impressionnable. M^e X est vouée à ces douleurs exquises ; son émotivité, son impressionnabilité ne lui permettent pas d'en éviter une seule. Il est vrai qu'elle ne s'arrête pas longtemps à un état d'âme ; elle a vite fait de repousser les suggestions mélancoliques. Il ne faut pas lui demander de se résigner ou de capituler ; elle ne fait aucune concession aux contingences, et je la crois bien capable de brusquer orgueilleusement tous ceux qui voudraient se mettre à la traverse de ses impulsions. C'est un caractère, et même un caractère indomptable, conscient de ses supériorités, qu'il faut prendre comme il est, avec ses exagérations motrices, ses frénésies, et ses outrances si parfaitement inhérentes à son étiquette de nerveuse supérieure qu'il serait impossible d'y remédier sans ruiner sa nature.

Elle est artiste innée, avec un goût très fin ; l'application pourrait y ajouter beaucoup, mais sa facilité ne l'oblige pas à s'efforcer. Tous ses mérites sont étroitement liés à sa spontanéité, et limités par cette même qualité.

Une incontestable distinction plane sur tout le caractère et révèle qu'il s'agit évidemment ici d'une grande dame.

CRÉPIEUX-JAMIN.

ROUEN, le 22/7/1927.

These two fortunes may not be true of me, but as I value all records of permanent praise I kept them ; and everything the Viennese deformity prophesied of my future came true.

There is a risk in writing about oneself ; but I have always taken risks, as without them I do not think life would be worth living ; also it is difficult to distinguish between the Self that others think us, the Self we think is ours, and the Self which we wish to impress upon the world. It may not amuse my readers, but it amuses me to try and unravel these selves.

After our marriage, my husband told me that what had struck him most about me when we first knew each other was my "imaginative insight" ; and when I asked him what he meant, he said :

“Your knowledge of human nature ; and insight into character” ; and we went on to discuss how this came about. He pointed to the remarkable men he had known who were deficient in this sort of gift, and, the experience—which he and I shared—of the stupid ones who *had* it.

It might be said that no one can be stupid who understands his fellow-creatures ; but I have met simple folk who could hardly read and write who have made shrewd comments upon character. It is not through intellect or education that you find either God or man, but through something far rarer—something elusive, profound, and impossible to define.

Continuing our discussion, I said that I did not think the imaginative insight he attributed to me came from instinct—the sort of guesswork by which criminals are detected, or the faculty that is given to a tea-taster or water-finder—but that after an early and unbeglamoured intimacy with myself and my family, I started upon the study of other people. My brothers-in-law, sisters-in-law, as well as my own family, represented such variety in appearance, kind, and type, that without going far afield they gave me ample food for reflection. Some were eccentric to the point of insanity, others commonplace to the verge of eccentricity—and there was something endearing in the faults of all of them.

I was born with an ardent interest in humanity ; and there is nothing that human beings can suffer, endure, or enjoy, with which I am not in sympathy.

My father had a hasty intuition into the natures of the business men with whom he had been brought up ; and, while appearing irritable, gullible, and sheer, he was sound, steady, and shrewd. His lively interests were not entirely centred upon making money. He liked pictures, books, dancing, acting, and sport ; and though irascible at the mildest interruption when occupied, he was gay and gregarious, and liked people. My mother did not like people ; she liked gardening and the country, and

never seemed to seek the support of intimacy : I often heard her exclaim at Glen before the arrival of a friend or an acquaintance :

“ I can’t think why Mr. or Mrs. So-and-So is coming here ! ” and unless the suspected guests had some knowledge of flowers, conservatories, green-fly, or shrubs, she was not interested in them. She took no stock, and had no shares in society. Hazlitt writes : “ In our love of Nature there is all the force of individual attachment, combined with the most airy speculation ” : and I think this described my mother ; as she abhorred introspection, and was only at her ease with flowers, or with those who exacted nothing from her. This detachment did not come from hardness : but it was so alien to my own nature that I sometimes wondered if my mother did not superimpose it on herself to conceal the scars she had suffered in her early married life over the deaths of her children. (I do not think any mother ever gets over the death of her child.)

The girls of my family were not at all detached, but took an interest in every new-comer and made easy and enduring friendships. Being closer in age than my other three sisters, Laura and I were seldom separated. Very different in appearance and temperament, we were united by a common taste in literature, a passionate love of Glen, the Border, and a deep inner sense of religion. I do not know how this sense arose, as our minister’s Sabbath sermons were so foolish, that sitting in the family pew we dared not look at one another, but concentrated our attention on the sheepdogs that lay by their shepherds in the pews below so as to conceal our merriment ; nor can I recall a single occasion upon which my mother, or any of our teachers, talked to us about God.

It was only after hearing a sermon preached in Peebles by Principal Caird—a brother of Edward Caird, the Master of Balliol—that Laura and I started discussions upon religion, and how far our intellect should be surrendered to our Faith. What conclusions we arrived at

are of no moment ; but I remember on more than one occasion when we were walking on the moors we knelt and said our prayers together. I can never think of those glorious days of exciting acquaintance and high adventure with its background of Border beauty without being reminded of what Coleridge murmured before he died :

“ The scenes of my early life have stolen into my heart like breezes blown from the Spice Islands.”

Living in a family of such various temperaments and characters, and away from all contact with the outer world, enabled me to start early upon the baffling and absorbing study of human beings. When you consider that God has made us physically the same to an eyelash, it is surprising that so few people are alike. “ There is nowt so queer as folk,” is an old Scotch saying which Lord Stamfordham told me after discussing the reason why young and promising politicians failed to reach the summit of their ambitions.

To say a stupid thing, I think the reason why so many men failed—and those that he and I were discussing were such—was because they lacked love, and such love as they had, was put out of action by being entirely centred upon themselves. There are many famous examples in History to prove that this assertion of mine is inadequate ; but I am not writing about Cromwell, Napoleon, Frederick and Peter the Great, or any other hard historical hero, but of the men I have known and observed in my own life-time.

Ambition is of primary importance, but to make yourself inaccessible or distrusted is not the best way of achievement. Too much egoism, complacency, vanity, and self-reference—whether in public, or in private life—ultimately alienate admiration, and I can truly say that the self-indulgence I have witnessed in asperity, sensuality, touchiness and intemperance, have wrecked the careers and stained the reputation of many promising men. The copy-books should have written : “ Vanity is the

root of all evil," and not "Money," as I have not seen so much evil, as I have seen absorption and dullness come from love of money. But vanity and love of Self are the undertakers of that knowledge which men must acquire if they wish to have any permanent success in life.

My husband and I nearly always agreed in our estimate of men ; and when two people as different from, and devoted to, one another as he and I were, it was natural that we should develop a corresponding penetration. We derived as much diversion out of discussions upon the temperaments, habits, minds, motives and characters of our family, colleagues and friends, as we did when talking upon literature, politics and Art.

This is easily understood when the men and women that we knew and saw most of were as varied, and remarkable, as Jowett, Gladstone, Rosebery, Meredith, Morley, Harcourt, Haldane, Bowen, Balfour, Birrell, Barrie, Symonds, Grey, Crewe, and Kitchener ; and the women—Lady Horner, Countess Benckendorff, Lady Betty Balfour, Lady Wemyss,¹ Lady Frances Balfour, and Lady Lewis,² not to mention Henry's own daughters—Violet Bonham Carter and Elizabeth Bibesco.

We also enjoyed talking about one another ; as until we married, my husband had never been interested in his own nature and character, nor can I truly say that even after our marriage he cared much about them. He had no vanity, and though self-sufficing, nothing that he achieved in life would have made him self-satisfied. But when I pointed out his own becalmed and unconscious nobility of nature, and trifling defects, he was sceptical, interested, and amused.

Without being self-conscious, I have always been interested in myself—not so much because of my mind, or morals—much less of my appearance !—but because in my youth I was easily agitated, and my nerves and

¹ The Earl of Wemyss's mother.

² Mother of the present Miss Katie Lewis.

health have always been affected by my emotions. It is this disquieting fact that depressed and puzzled me. I never knew that the health of anyone of either will, intelligence, or character, could have been as nearly dominated as mine has always been by my emotions ; and had it not been for my two doctors, first Sir John Williams, and later Sir Thomas Parkinson, who were both devoted to me, I might have developed the worst of all maladies—self-pity—which my clever friend Mrs. Crawshay says is like “sitting in wet shoes.” When I was happy there was nothing I could not do. I could ride horses in Leicestershire that carried men of eighteen stone ; I could dance till dawn ; tramp the moors till sunset ; and could wait for hours at midnight to meet my children upon their arrival at any London railway station. But when I was apprehensive or unhappy, my full face became like a profile, and my anatomy too technical to be exposed to the observation of people who go into the world for amusement. I have known myself lie awake till the sparrows chattered at daybreak, from misery and apprehension ; and though no one would suspect it, I have always been an artist and a woman of moods. I am not at all complex, duplex, or mysterious ; and though rather accomplished—riding, dancing, acting, drawing, and passionately fond of music—I had the good, or bad luck to be born with nothing of sufficient mark to make me vain, and a sort of freedom from Self has given me courage. If anyone had told me when I was young that the courage I possess was *rare*, I would have laughed at them ; but I have come to the conclusion that it *is*. Most people are inward-bound, and more or less armed for life—I never was ; many feel put back by rebuffs—they urged me forward ; there are others who are searching for happiness without the vitality to find it—it was always mine ; and the majority of mankind who can face tigers in jungles are afraid of themselves. My courage is unconscious and more a temptation than a virtue. I only care to hear people say what they *really*

think—whether about myself, or about anything else—and glide off those who are too agreeable, or who are in constant agreement with me. Flattery is like icing on a cake, you can never guess whether the foundation of it is seed, sponge or sultana. I realize the importance of tact without indulging too much in it, detest touchiness, and have been able to stare Truth in the face. Some will say that speaking the truth is an indulgence that makes others uncomfortable ; but inaccuracy and lies lend themselves to endless worries, and as I am a worryable person, the truth on the whole has served me well. Others will say, “What is Truth?”—a platitude to conceal timidity—but we all have a rough idea of what it is ; and if expressed with consideration, it can only hurt those who have exalted opinions about themselves. Little lies make many a stranger, and when my friends tell me the lies are *white*, I think that they are colour-blind. I am easily hurt, but seldom offended. I forget nothing ; and though not ungenerous, I am not fundamentally forgiving.

When my daughter Elizabeth was fourteen I took her to pay her first country-house visit to Fallodon. Our host—Sir Edward Grey¹—told me that while walking with her he had said something which he feared had been tactless.

“I hope, Elizabeth, that I have not offended you,” he said.

She replied : “Oh, no !—You have only hurt me.”

“What is the difference ?” he asked.

“The one wounds your vanity, the other your heart,” was her reply.

It is not from vanity, still less from want of heart, that I am unforgiving ; but it is difficult for me to turn the other cheek, as by nature I am combative and excitable, and the friends who have wounded me never seem to mind—or if they *do*, seldom say they are sorry.²

¹ Viscount Grey of Fallodon.

² In Mr. Evan Charteris's Biography of Sir Edmund Gosse, he confesses that his hero was “far too ready to fancy slights” ; and

There is nothing more endearing and disarming than to say : " I've killed my mother and will never do it again ! " and the difficulty that most people find in saying they are sorry is beyond my comprehension. But I am not sure even if they *did*, that my memory is sufficiently pliable, or character adequately noble to forgive them.

" Those have most power to harm us whom we love : we lay our sleeping lives within their arms," is terrifyingly true. But now that my years have ripened I realize how much I have lost in life by not clinging to Christ's injunction upon forgiveness. People do not realize that Christianity is not credulity, it is common sense ; and if instead of being an article of faith, it was carried out in practice, the Peace that passeth all understanding would not be so difficult of attainment. There are some defects, like jealousy, which seem to be beyond human control ; but though I would like to think it, I am not at all certain that the lack of grace to forgive is one of them. We must be fair even to ourselves, and in other ways I do not think I am lacking in generosity.

I have sometimes wondered if my character and career would not have been different had I been born with

proceeds to give examples of his many quarrels with lifelong friends, and the puerile reasons that prompted them. It was not till I read this book that I understood why some of my literary friends—while admiring and valuing him as a critic—did not care for Gosse. To quarrel with friends, not for what he thought they had done to hurt others, but for what he imagined they had done to himself, showed a lack of grandeur of character lamentable in a man who could write such a fine and brilliant book as " Father and Son." In spite of Edmund Gosse's vitality of mind, generous helpfulness to young authors, and engaging desire to be loved and praised, he never seems to have taken stock of his own character. The foundation of his nature was insolent ; and in a pert and bird-like way—without any trace of penitence—he hopped from one fancied affront to another, which while not detracting from the penetration of his criticism, impaired him as a man of fame. Had Evan Charteris's hero been a man of size, his Biography would rank among the best written in my lifetime.

another appearance. As Bernard Shaw says, with the adaptability of a man of the world rather than a believer in Socialism : " You never can tell " !—but I would like to have been tall, calm, without nerves, and with quite another face. My sort of looks are of the kind that bore me when I see them on other people. I never care for a hooked nose, or eyes that are not wide apart ; nor do I like a little mouth. My nose was not so bad before I broke it out hunting ; but now, it is more like a limb than a feature. My eyes, though expressive, are too close together, but my hair grows well, and my forehead—had it been wider—is of the shape that I admire. (The hats worn by my sex to-day betray the sort of foreheads that I do not care for, as I never admire foreheads like knees, and I think no top to the head—just as no back to the head—must be a matter of speculation for every phrenologist.) I would not like to have had a keepsake face ; nevertheless, I would like to have been born beautiful, as I think I could have made a better job of it than many of the beauties that I have known.

Some of the most lovely women that I have met have single-track faces which after a time cease to arrest me. There are the pointed Gothic faces, open country faces, shrewd rodent faces, and round kindly faces. You may see fine features with inferior eyes, and glorious eyes in common faces. You can see aureoles of red hair framing faces defaced by freckles, and I have observed perfect faces wrecked by a sullen and sinister expression. There are also the rare countenances that are more important than features, which have such an inspired expression that you hardly know how to describe them, but only feel the moving influence of their beauty.

I have been told that the life people lead makes an impression on their faces ; but this is not my experience. Women that I have known with faces like Madonnas in cathedrals have been hard as Aberdeen granite, and some of the most virginal and innocent eyes conceal cat-like and callous cruelty.

If you are born plain, all you can do is to make the best of things, and hope that the interest you feel in those you are talking to will take the eye off—like the three-card trick where no one spots the queen. The greatest compliment ever paid to my appearance was when my husband told me that his wife—Helen—had said to him : “ I think there is something noble in the expression of Margot Tennant’s face.”

I have always preached the importance of movement,¹ line, and what, in old days, was called “ deportment,” and think more attention should be paid to this by those who train children. In these ways I have practised what I preached. I think there must be something peculiar in my voice, as nearly every servant recognizes who I am when I speak to them on the telephone. I hardly like to tell them that they must be musical to have such fine ears, for fear they should think I am praising my voice, but as only four butlers in London have pencils near their telephones we are rung off before exchanging further compliments.

When I was by way of lecturing in America—the last expression I would have used for my hazardous experiment!—one of the reporters describing me, said that though I was a poor lecturer I had a beautiful voice. He was certainly right about the first, but he may have been too flattering about the second. I speak distinctly, because my father *always* said “ What ? ”—whether he heard his children or not, and it is almost physical pain for me when I have to listen to people who speak either unintelligibly, or in high or raucous voices. When I was dangerously ill after my first confinement, I wrote the names of a few of my friends and gave them to my nurses so that the time of their visits should be curtailed, as their voices got on my nerves to such a degree that when they left me I was dissolved in tears. This sensibility to sound has not decreased with years.

¹ I do not think I would ever have been in love with Peter Flower—who had little character, and less intellect—had he not moved with the grace of a panther.

To turn from what is physical to what is mental, I know nothing about my intellect ; as though I am not stupid, the mathematical side of my brain is like dumb notes upon a damaged piano, and I could never master the multiplication table. It is not easy for any woman to judge the value of her intellect. Men take their degrees in schools and Universities, and though a few of my sex do the same, the average woman takes her degree in society. From the time boys go to school, their education promotes competition, but though the education of women is not of sufficient growth to judge of their intellectual capacity, with a few exceptions, the women I have met who have scored in examinations have not been strikingly intelligent. People will differ from me, and say it is because I was against giving women the suffrage that I underrate my sex, but I think what differentiates men from women is more moral and intellectual than physical.¹

Writing of superior women, with the exception of my sister Lucy and myself, I hardly ever met one who enjoyed parting with money. I remember an old hansom cab-driver saying to me : " If we depended upon tips from you ladies, we would be off the streets." Women are less scrupulous at games than men, and have not the same impartial sense of justice : no woman would like to be tried by a female judge. Sexual passion is supposed to be stronger in men than in women, but when roused, it is more importunate, stubborn, and tenacious in my sex ; and whether from lack of training, or from what cause I do not know, but reason is not the strongest part of a woman's intellectual equipment. There is something in a masculine mind that enables him to deliberate with fairness, and argue without heat ; the

¹ Men are more physically sensitive than women ; and I have known married men who after the birth of their first child, for no discoverable reason refused to sleep with their wives ; and while appearing on excellent terms, were incapable of resuming physical relations with them.

average man is nearly always reasonable, the average woman is not. Nor, beyond writing remarkable novels and poetry, has my sex ever shown much creative genius. Neither physical force, nor education are needed to write poetry, compose music, or paint portraits; yet you can count on one hand the female poets, composers, or artists that have made their names famous.

I have always wanted to be a man, if only for the reason that I would like to have gauged the value of my intellect. All I am certain of is, that I could never have passed any examination, because though quick in some ways—such as movement, and decision—I am remarkably slow in others, and could never have concentrated my attention upon subjects that do not interest me—a quality without which no one can win scholarly distinction. My verbal memory is among my intellectual defects, but as I have always kept a diary I have seldom tried to exercise it. Living with a family like the Asquiths, I never got over my surprise at their remarkable verbal memories, and I have heard Violet¹ and Elizabeth² recite poems that they have not looked at for years with perfect accuracy. They both inherit this from their father whose memory was equally formidable and precise, whether exercised in verse or in prose.³

¹ Lady Violet Bonham Carter.

² Princess Antoine Bibesco.

³ In October, 1916, a little paper-bound book was published at the Clarendon Press, by Alexander Montgomerie Bell, called: "The Johnson Calendar, or Samuel Johnson for every day in the Year. Being a series of sayings and tales." It was dedicated to my husband in these words:

TO THE RIGHT HON. HERBERT HENRY ASQUITH,
PRIME MINISTER OF GREAT BRITAIN.

SIR,

This selection of quotations from Johnson has the honour of being inscribed with your name—not because you are the most distinguished living Member of Balliol College, where knowledge of Johnson is one among happy traditions:—nor yet because, through perplexities and sorrows, amid trials at home and perils abroad, which have no true parallel in English History, you have guided the

MORE MEMORIES

Mine is a diary memory which from habit has become exact. I may exaggerate in narration but I am always accurate in fact.

When I told Arthur Balfour that I kept a diary, he said that I should always leave wide margins on my manuscript paper, and date the happenings, and my comments upon them, as there was nothing so easy to fake as a diary : " It is a common temptation to be wise after the event." This was a new idea to me, but I was grateful to him for his advice ; as though I hardly ever look at my diaries—which I ceased to write after publishing my Autobiography—I became precise, and have no difficulty in recalling persons, places, and conversations which have left a permanent mark upon my memory.

destinies of our country with success, by just acts extending the conception of English honour among foreign lands, and by words of fire encouraging generous minds throughout the world to fight the good fight—following the example of Johnson, and of other great Englishmen of the past ;—

but for the simpler reason that,—

in a long list once compiled by the writer, of quotations from Johnson, made by Judges on the Bench, Members of Parliament, Writers of leading articles, Reforming ladies, and other celebrities, you were the only one, who

Quoted him correctly,

displaying thereby a Johnsonian truthfulness, to preserve which in the following pages is also the endeavour of

Your obliged servant,

THE AUTHOR.

Mr. Spencer Leigh Hughes gave Henry a copy of this charming little book in March, 1917. The dedication gave him infinite pleasure ; he marked the sayings, and made notes in the margins, and seldom travelled without having the book in his dispatch-box.

There was no surer avenue of approach to my husband's heart than the one leading to the sayings and writings of Dr. Johnson.

Among the many marked passages, is one on page 136 that he was fond of quoting :

" He is a scholar undoubtedly, Sir, but remember that he would run from the world, and that it is not the world's business to run after him. I hate a fellow whom pride, or cowardice, or laziness, drives into a corner, and does nothing when he is there but sit and growl ; let him come out as I do, and bark."

All I can say about my mind is that, like a fire carefully laid by a good housemaid, it is one that any match will light, and I have a concentrated power of listening to, and being excited by, every new idea. Perhaps it would be true to say that my mind is a mixture of reflection ¹ and vitality, for though I talk too much, I am deceptively aware of all that is said.

Good conversation is as stimulating to me as a day's hunting over flying fences, and I am sleepless with excitement after joining in it. I have been exceptionally lucky in having good talkers among my friends. I remember Laurence Oliphant saying to me at Glen in 1885 that he divided the world into "life-givers and life-takers," and many of the best talkers he knew had left him exhausted. My sister Laura said she divided the world into people who understood what she said and those who did *not*; and a fantastic female finished our discussion by saying she divided the world into "oysters and harps."

Hazlitt says of Coleridge—whom he heard preaching in a Unitarian Church in 1798—"He launched into his subject like an eagle dallying with the wind."

It is the incapacity to be deeply interested, or to really listen, which spoils all good conversation, as no one can talk well if they perceive under the bowed head a wandering eye or borrowed smile. There are noisy minds, restless minds, discursive minds, rhetorical minds, and somnolent minds; but it is the eager, receptive mind that carries on good conversation, and if you are in the habit of thinking aloud there is nothing more disconcerting than a wandering eye or an irrelevant interruption.

There are other things that discourage conversation: the announcement that you are going to tell a good story (and the chuckle that precedes it) is always a dangerous opening; as even good stories, unless the narrator, or someone of the circle, has the intrepidity to bridge the

¹ I think that the reason Edmund Gosse lacked reflection was because though his mind was vital, it was always on tiptoe.

ensuing silence,¹ can damp a dinner-party. There is nothing that I admire more than the quiet comment that chaperons one good anecdote to another, as to be copious in narrative is apt to make the boldest listeners silent. Too much brilliance has its disadvantages, and misplaced wit may raise a laugh, but often beheads a topic of profound interest. In a circle of brilliant talkers I have often longed for one clumsy comment to relieve the strain. Dr. Johnson says : "The size of a man's understanding may always be justly measured by his mirth" ; and I prefer people who laugh silently.²

Speaking for myself, eating and drinking—except as a means of gathering friends together—have given me little pleasure ; but after fox-hunting, the greatest pleasure I have had in life has been intellectual and endearing conversation : it is the only means that I know of personal communication, and nobody can be consistently happy who is independent of personal relations.

If for no other reason, my life has been happier than that of any woman I have known because I married a man whose mind was anchored when most men's are at sea, and whose love for me never usurped his interest in our conversation.

Coleridge writes in his prose "Introduction to the Improvisatory" upon utterance, and the companionship of perfect love which, though it may appear irrelevant, is what I have always felt about conversation.

Love, truly such, is itself not the most common thing in the world : and mutual love still less so. But that enduring personal attachment . . . in addition to a depth and constancy of character of no everyday occurrence, supposes a peculiar sensibility and tenderness of nature ; a constitutional *communicativeness* and *utterance* of heart

¹ Dr. Johnson says : "It is always observable that silence propagates itself, and that the longer talk has been suspended, the more difficult it is to find anything to say."

² Lord Chesterfield said : "The vulgar often laugh, but never smile ; whereas well-bred people often smile, but seldom laugh. A witty thing never excited laughter ; it pleases only the mind, and never distorts the countenance."

MORE OR LESS ABOUT MYSELF

and soul ; a delight in the detail of sympathy, in the outward and visible signs of the sacrament within—to count, as it were, the pulses of the life of love . . . thus brought home and pressed to the very bosom of hourly experience ; it supposes a heartfelt reverence for worth, not the less deep because divested of its solemnity by habit, by familiarity, by mutual infirmities, and even by a feeling of modesty which will arise in delicate minds, when they are conscious of possessing the same or the corresponding excellence in their own characters.

This may be taking an exalted view of the power of utterance, but it describes the communion that my husband and I shared in our married life, and the conversations that are engraved for ever upon my memory. In spite of the new life dangerously undertaken by me to be a stepmother to five exceptionally brilliant children, the term “ marriage-bond ” never described our matrimonial relations, and I pity the couples that I meet who seem to have little of interest to say to one another.

Though most of my friends at home and abroad that talked best are dead, there are several living whose conversation gives me perpetual pleasure. Among these are Mr. Birrell, my son-in-law,¹ Sir James Barrie, Monsieur Briand, Siegfried Sassoon, Hugo Wemyss, Evan Charteris, Desmond MacCarthy, St. John Middleton, Lord Hugh Cecil, Lord Kilbracken, Sylvester Gates, and Rufus Reading.

* * * * *

I would like to say something here about Lord Reading, and only wish I had the capacity to write the history of his romantic and adventurous life ; for though my husband and I urged him to write it himself, I doubt now if he will ever have the leisure to do it. Whoever his future biographer may be, he will have for his subject a man of a romantic career not inferior to Disraeli's ; beautiful to look at, provokingly conciliatory, faithful in friendship, wise in counsel, and of infectious high spirits and good humour. I do not know a sweeter,

¹ Antoine Bibesco is remarkable both as a talker, and a listener.

gayer nature than Rufus Reading's; and his untiring ambition, devouring industry, and complete unself-consciousness make up for a lack of intellectual equipment, and his uncritical tolerance for men of no great significance.

With his long experience of the foibles, failures, and follies of mankind, acquired at the Bar, he is never censorious, and has a sort of simplicity and conscience which success will never spoil. Although he has much of the caution, he has none of the restlessness of his race, and is entirely free from snobbishness or vanity. Whether alone with you or in company, there is something about his conversation which is dramatic and engaging, and he has a youthful and infectious laugh.

It would take too much space to write of the others on my list but they are all admirable talkers.

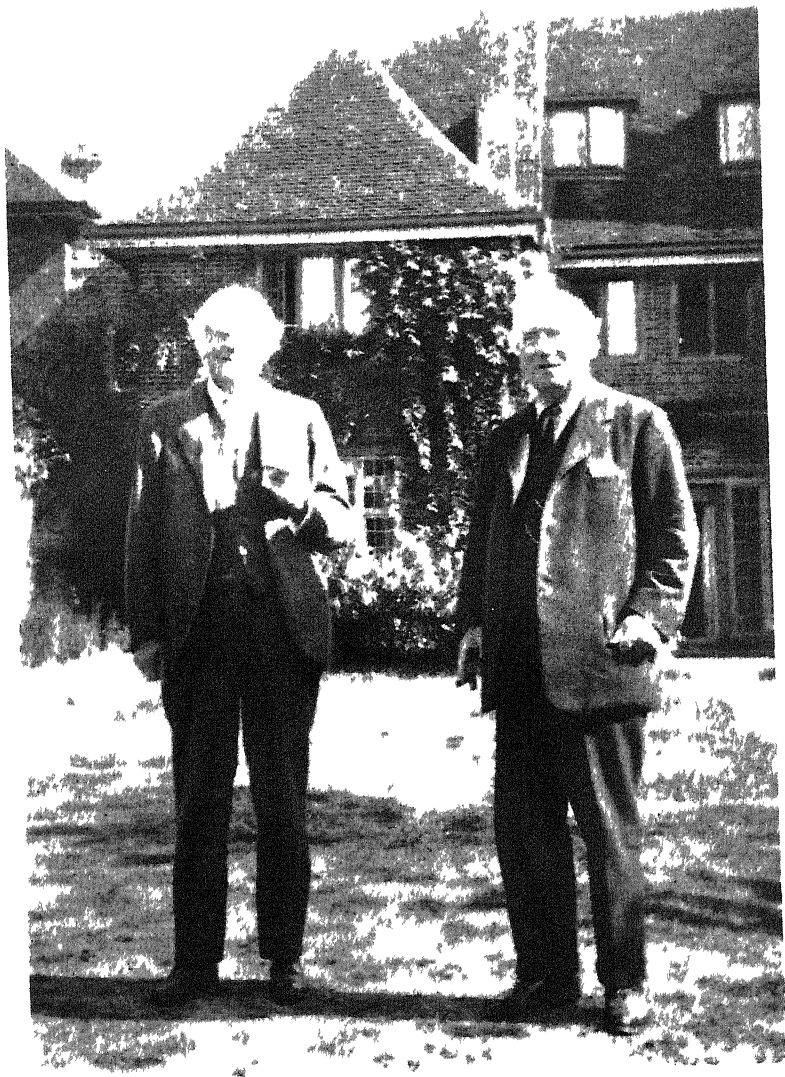
Mr. Birrell has sent me the following letter for inclusion in this book :

MY DEAR MARGOT,

You have asked me to do what I know is impossible for me—and though there is nothing odd in that, what is odd is that I have promised to try to do it, viz. to put upon paper a sketch in words of you and your husband, whom I must be permitted throughout to call "Asquith," for by no other name did I call him whilst alive—I know I shall fail, but there are fireplaces in Bedford Square !—

Although Asquith's senior by more than two years—(January, 1850, against September, 1852)—and though for a good while 1874 to 1886 only separated from each other (I, in Lincoln's Inn, and he in the Temple) by that roaring Fleet Street which has cut so many lives in two, I never met him until the end of 1886 or the beginning of 1887, at a dinner party in South Kensington. I only remember the date even approximately for it was just after he had got into Parliament for East Fife, and both he and his first wife came in late (arm in arm as the fashion then was in South Kensington) and apologized for their delay by an ill-timed division "in the House" . . . !

After that I recollect several pleasant dinners in Hampstead, mostly *tête-à-tête*, and long discussions not about law, or politics, but on Books and Authors; especially Balzac and George Borrow. I was then raving mad about both, but he never raved, nor indeed was he at any time a man easy to move out of his path. In a



Lord Oxford and Augustine Birrell in "The Wharf" garden

MORE OR LESS ABOUT MYSELF

puritanic (and Bowdlerized) phrase he was "a heavy-bodied Christian." His taste was soundness itself, being based on accurately acquired and tenaciously retained principles of criticism.

In 1889 I got into Parliament myself at a by-election for West Fife, and consequently saw more of him, but perhaps less intimately than before.

Asquith was never a genuine Back Bencher. To explain and illustrate the differences between the mental equipment of the two kinds of Benchers—Front and Back—would require the genius of Disraeli and the analytical faculty of Hazlitt—writers long since deceased!

It must not be supposed that Asquith from the first kept—as Mr. Gladstone was said to have done—his eye on the Treasury Bench, intending his backside to follow in due course. Not at all—Asquith had none of the office-seeker about him, but for all that he was marked out from the start as a future Minister. Whenever party tactics required a resolution to be moved from the Back Bench condemning the policy of the Front Bench, Asquith was the one selected from us all to set the debate rolling, and this he never failed to do in a speech exciting universal admiration. Whether he was persuasive or not is another matter. To get through the job, and to carry with you all the men behind in the same lobby as yourself, is all that is generally required of a parliamentary orator. Great Back Benchers have seldom become great Prime Ministers.

Asquith was always reckoned in the House of Commons as an Oxford man *par excellence*, and as a Balliol man in particular. Whether this was to the advantage of the Leader of a Party of Nonconformists is also another matter.

No one was in the least surprised when in 1892, Asquith—without having held any subordinate political office—became Home Secretary and one of the leading figures in Parliament. It was obviously his natural right.

His second marriage to Margot Tennant excited much remark in certain easily fluttered dovescotes.

Asquith had from the date of his first acquaintance with Margot paid her the finest compliment a man of his calibre could pay to a woman of hers—that is, he took her seriously, and asked her bluntly, as his manner was, what she was going to make of her life? And she, in her turn, perhaps began to wonder what he was going to make of his. And so this process of co-education went on until by a hard blow of unexpected fate Asquith became, after eighteen years of married happiness, a free man. The education then proceeded on a different footing, and after an interval paved the way to another union.

MORE MEMORIES

Both Asquith and Margot knew perfectly well what they were about. He had a great deal of the spirit of the old Merchant Adventurers of Bristol who never hesitated to sail their precious cargoes on stormy seas. He was a man who could look on tempests, and remain unshaken ; and as for Margot, her geese were never swans and she well knew, as did Samuel Johnson's "Tetty," a "sensible" man when she saw one. She had also perhaps a quicker eye for a "rotter" than her Balliol lord.

In fact, odd though it may appear, the pair were well suited to one another.

There was inherent in Asquith's nature, that "fineness" which has been described as "the first characteristic of a gentleman." He had also a vein of simplicity running through his highly intellectual structure, and also what is hard to describe otherwise than by the much abused word *sentimentality*. His tears, despite his habits of fierce self-restraint, were never far beneath the surface. If suddenly told a story of moving excellence, displaying character, and tenderness, his eyes would fill with tears ; and so when he wished to express sympathy to a friend whom he knew was suffering deeply.

As for Asquith's political career, is it not written in the Biography we have all read ?

The real split in the Liberal Party was the Boer War. This breach has never been healed. But that is no concern of this paper.

As for Margot herself—still happily with us and therefore the less written about the better—I cannot employ the common phrase about "tiger hunting" for that is a pastime I have never pursued, but if by any untoward and most unlikely event I was ever to be wrecked on a desert island, and needed someone, as I certainly should, to keep up my spirits and the kettle perpetually on the boil, I should account myself exceptionally lucky if whilst waiting for the steamer to pick us up and take us back to our natural belongings I should find myself side by side with Margot Asquith.

AUGUSTINE BIRRELL.

February 2, 1933.

* * * * *

There have been too many essays written on good conversation for me to write further on the subject. "Let your conversation be in Heaven" may be asking too much of human nature ; but it is a text that justifies my sense of its value ; and let no one suppose that talking is a waste of *Time*.

I do not wish to blame, praise, or excuse myself, or

claim in any way virtues which I do not possess, but my sense of *Time*, and pursuant Punctuality have been of incalculable advantage to me in my scheme of life : they have prepared me for emergency, and postponed fatigue ; as there is nothing more futile and fatiguing than what is called "making up for lost time." One of the problems of living, as I have found it, is how best to apportion work to leisure, action to thought, and to plan one's life so as to conserve, rather than waste your own, and other people's time. Dr. Johnson writes : ¹

It is well known that Time once past never returns ; and that the moment which is lost is lost for ever. Time therefore ought, above all other kinds of property, to be free from invasion ; and yet there is no man who does not claim the power of wasting that time which is the right of others.

I have been accused of planning things too far beforehand ; but for me, the planless are selfish people aptly described by Dr. Johnson—in the same context—as "the invaders who continually ravage life." It is permissible for all thinking beings to have a close season in Time,² so that the world should leave them now and again. To achieve anything deeper than *success* in life the world must not be always with us, or we have little opportunity of gathering together the reflections which enrich experience. Shakespeare writes :

They melt like mist, the solid lands,
They shape themselves like clouds and go.

And the same should be said of people ; but if we have always to fit our plans to suit those who have none, our time is ravaged. It is possible that I set too much store by punctuality, but when people say they have no time to do this, or that, I feel almost certain that they have neither plans, nor punctuality.

¹ In one of his sonnets he uses the expression : "panting time."

² Dr. Johnson writes : "Whatever withdraws us from the power of our senses ; whatever makes the past, the distant, or the future, predominate over the present advances us in the dignity of thinking beings."

Busy men think ahead, and have time for nearly every eventuality; and in all my married life I never heard my husband say "I have no time."

I have sometimes wondered which profession I would have chosen had I been a man; but after long reflection, I would have chosen the Bar, not as an *end*, but as a *means*, to the life of Politics which ultimately would have been my ambition. Lawyers are the only professional men who have long holidays, and however much the disgraceful airlessness of our Law Courts may sap your vitality, the open air of holidays revives it. I could never have been a soldier or sailor, because though both professions have the dignity of danger, they are inseparable from a wooden monotony, and the sort of red tape ill-fitted to my nature. I would have been a failure in the City, as I am an imbecile over bulls and bears, stocks and shares, British funds, foreign bonds, frozen money, corporation stocks, credit, consols, and conversion. The Civil Service robs one of independence; and Diplomacy is almost as effectively achieved to-day through the telephone as through Ambassadors.

Politics have always been the main interest of my life and those—unless they are absorbed in literature, science, or philosophy—who say they are not interested in politics cease to be citizens of the world. No one of significance would choose to be on a house-boat when they could be on a man-of-war; and now that commerce and finance are at a standstill and half the nations of Europe in a state of siege, nothing but broad, moral statesmanship can save the ship from sinking.¹

You will be told that with the extension of the franchise constituencies have become unwieldy; that the public do not care for speeches, and that the House of Commons has so degenerated, that a life of politics presents no future for a young man of ambition. But I never remember the time when the House of Commons had not degenerated, or when people did not talk nonsense: and

¹ This was written in the spring of 1931.

with a little courage, enterprise, and team-work, to-day is as good as any other day to make your fame in politics.

Napoleon wrote in July, 1792 : " The people are little worth the trouble men take to obtain their favour," and though this is partially true, I think that " the people " will always respect men that do not pander to them.

* * * * *

I have strayed away from the main purpose of this chapter, and at the risk of boring my readers will return to it.

I have never been able to " Ride the ford as you find it." There is something as restless in my mind as there is in my body ; and a sort of moral or intellectual hunger has always gnawed and nibbled at my serenity. The burning belief in the perfectibility of human nature, and the longing to find in those I care for, qualities and attributes that they do not possess, have made me restless, lonely, and sheer. Why not be like Jane Austen and enjoy people as they are ?—Perceiving the contradictions in human beings—their manners, motives, and conduct—inspired her faultless writing ; and in spite of a limited experience of the great passions, enabled her to turn her life into a satisfying and perpetual comedy. Why not loosen the string that ties me with an almost fanatical hold to a wish to make those I love *more* of everything that I admire, and which I, myself, would like to be ? Why such acute sensibility to stubborn defects that are not going to be changed, and gaps that will never be filled ?—I go from disappointment to disappointment, like a collier in a coal-pit goes from one coal-less seam to another, and knows that he will be called " a malingerer " if in the end he brings nothing to the mouth of the pit.

This moral restlessness has not made me censorious, cynical, or unappreciative : on the contrary, I know *no* one who has more emotional admiration for what is fine

in human nature than I, or who has more faith that the quality of my own experience may some day be of help to others. But I am more aware of the gaps, than amused by the emptiness of the hearts and minds of many that I meet ; and find myself thrumming the walls—as a prisoner, under long sentence, might thrum the wall of his cell—with impatience at my own incapacity.

My friends say : “ But you can’t alter people !—you must take them as you find them : some of their defects are amiable, some laughable, and I would not for the world see them changed.” I try to explain that though I am in general agreement with them there is still something missing ; and I would despair of life, if there was nothing we could do to help the neighbour we are enjoined to love. Are we actors touring the provinces playing every evening and every afternoon the same part in the same play?—I cannot imagine a more tedious way of living, or one more fraught with futility.

The hymn “ As the tree falls so will it lie ” always made Laura and me profoundly unhappy. A tree has roots—why could it not be lifted and replanted?—The hymn does not say it was cut down—otherwise obviously there was nothing to be done : it only fell, as many of us do. People might be like trees ; they have roots, and to judge by myself, I have gone through a process of replanting all through my life. I am haunted by a conviction that people need not lie as they fall but can replant themselves in bigger pots. It is a creed—a flame which is for ever burning within me but which flickers in a perpetual and disturbing draught. I am obsessed with the enthusiasm of an artist who is painting a picture and invites his friends to climb the hill and admire the distant beauty of the landscape that he is trying to reproduce. They say they know the landscape, distrust my art, and do not want to climb the hill. I cannot stand still and look on at failure. I seem to foresee some trifling spoke in the wheels of my friends’ lives which will ultimately prevent them from revolving, and

am urged by a dangerous impulse never to remain a spectator.

I am devoured by a desire to make things go, in the same way as you wish to assist a helpless hostess with a children's party or at a cotillion which looks like being a failure. I gaze round for a partner who will help me, but no one turns up; and beyond having tied two gold chairs together with their pocket-handkerchiefs not a guest lifts a finger; and I see all the money spent on presents, flowers, lights, and music wasted as the evening wears on. Expectant, vigilant, and exhausted, I go to bed feeling guilty of having shared the responsibility of my hostess's failure. This inner restlessness has pursued me all my life. Like electric light that is not sufficiently encased ends by setting houses on fire, my light is in constant danger of fusing. My hope to serve my fellow-creatures is not the inspiration of a finishing governess, nor does it come from any confidence in *myself*—on the contrary, I would welcome all co-operation; but I cannot sit still and watch people making a bad job of things. I cannot rid myself of the illusion that something can be done to bridge over our incommunicable lives; and in spite of repeated failure, the illusion squats like a banshee on my shoulder prompting me to renew a perpetual endeavour. I feel a sort of reckless pity for the lonely and disappointed.

It may be because I am a bad sleeper that I am such a poor spectator. If you lie quivering and awake, gazing at a moonless window, or listening to the hooting horns and early noises of a dawn that is dim, your sense of proportion becomes distorted, your nerves are frayed, and you become sudden, uncompromising, and irritable. No one is more conscious of these—and other defects—than I am, and they inflict wounds that are not easy to heal. Shakespeare says—with his astonishing insight into human nature:—"Those wounds heal ill which men do give themselves." But this inner hunger and restlessness comes from something more fundamental

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than lack of sleep or any physical misfit. It comes from an importunate desire to serve ; an unsatisfied love of humanity, and a profound respect for life. Nothing will shake my belief in the greatness of man, and the part he could play in this world before the long silence which screens us from the final adventure of Death.

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